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Iranian Women's Poetry from the Constitutional
Revolution to the Post-Revolution

by

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Submitted for Examination for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Gender Studies

University of Sussex

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Submission Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Gender Studies

**Iranian Women's Poetry from the Constitutional Revolution to the Post-
Revolution**

Summary

This thesis challenges the silenced voices of women in the Iranian written literary tradition and proposes a fresh evaluation of contemporary Iranian women's poetry. Because the presence of female poets in Iranian literature is a relatively recent phenomenon, there are few published studies describing and analysing Iranian women's poetry; most of the critical studies that do exist were completed in the last three decades after the Revolution in 1979. Addressing the ethical questions of gender in Persian literature by women, this study seeks to offer a systematic and historical reading of women's poetry in dialogical terms. It argues that Luce Irigaray's deconstructive method can be used productively as a means to explore the ways in which women deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations in Iran.

Irigaray's transcendental theories of the duality of subjectivity, masculine and feminine, and the culture of dialogic exchange between different subjects will challenge existing readings of Iranian women's poetry. This will be achieved using Irigarayan modes of resistance (mimesis, masquerade, strategic essentialism, utopian ideals, and employing novel language or structures of expression and subjectivity) across the three main conjunctures in the history of Iranian women's poetry. The thesis presents an Irigarayan reading of selected women poets within the constitutional period, the Pahlavi era, and the post-revolutionary period.

Through my assessment of these poems, a discussion begins which starts with the lived reality of female repression, and finishes with a prospect for women's freedom and enunciation. I will argue, using Irigaray, that it is essential for Iranian women to create a "house of language", a place in which they can practice living and articulating, so that they can achieve self-enunciation and the "sensible transcendental".

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

A survey of contemporary female poetry in Iran could offer us an insight into the layers of meaning in women's poetry in Iran. Whilst the literature of Iranian women has been well represented in Persian scholarship in recent years, individual investigation of their poetic narratives through the process of feminist discourse analysis is less present.

Many writers and critics agree that there is a disproportion between the critical attention devoted to male poets and writers, and that given to female poets and writers. Farzaneh Milani concedes that "no full-length study of Iranian women's literary tradition in contemporary Iran was undertaken despite the popular attention women writers had elicited. Major studies of literature dealt almost exclusively with the works of men" (Milani, 1992a: xv). Milani calls for studies and investigations into the silence and veiled voice of women in the Iranian literary tradition. She challenges her readers by asking "why are women writers absent from our classical literary scene? How could anyone or anything have been so successful in silencing such a large number of people for so long?" And, perhaps more importantly, she asks "why does the beginning of women's literary tradition in Iran coincide with their attempt to unveil?" (ibid: 1).

In search of a response to these questions, one has to seek evidence of the first presence of female writers in Iranian literature, which occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century. Silence, invisibility and immobility were considered moral standards for women to achieve. These withheld women writers from increasing in number and in their work. Female writers' presence in literature coincides with the first feminist movement in Iran;¹ it was initiated by an Iranian woman poet, Tahereh Qorrat al-E'in (1815-1851). Tahereh challenged issues such as the veil, marital relations and polygamy. She revealed her face during a debate in Qazvin and provoked men's anger at the time. However, Sedghi believes that because of Tahereh's conversion from Islam to Babism, she gained little legacy amongst Muslim women in Iran (Sedghi, 2007: 51). The growth of female poets started from the early days of the constitutional revolution

¹ Hamideh Sedghi in *Women and Politics in Iran* (2007) argues that Iranian feminism began at the turn of the 19th century, and went roughly through three stages. Women's awakening had begun earlier in history. The first stage of women's awakening can be dated to the first half of the nineteenth century.

in 1905, and they began not only to publish their works in the newly born women's journals, such as *Danesh* (Knowledge) in 1910, *Shokufeh* (Blossom) in 1913, *Zaban-e Zanan* (Woman's Language) in 1919 and *Nasavate Alam* (Women of the World) in 1921, but they also published their poems in other journals and newspapers of the time (ibid: 54). Fakhr-e Ozmā Arghun, for example, a noted feminist and the mother of Simin Behbahani, sent one of her patriotic poems to the *Eghdam* (Action) newspaper which came out in 1923-1924.

Because of the relatively recent visibility of female poets in Iranian literature, there have been no large studies describing and analysing Iranian women's poetry. Most of the critical studies were completed in the last three decades, after the Revolution in 1979. Milani argues that although women writers faced a severe absence of facilities and different forms of censorship in the post-revolutionary period, women's literary publication and selling exceeded pre-revolutionary levels (Milani, 1992a: 231). Milani reports that "between the winter of 1983 and 1985, 126 books by, or about women were published in Iran. In the course of twelve months, more than 500 such articles were written" (ibid). The first serious discussion and analysis of Iranian women's poetry emerged during the 1990s with *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* by Farzaneh Milani (1992a). This research indicated a need for further exploration and a more holistic and complex understanding, and the present study, focusing on women's poetry, is the outcome of these and other discussions on women's literary production. Its aim is to set these changes in the context of Persian patriarchal literary production in Iran from 1905 to 2016. This study also explores the alignments and tensions between these different domains. Although some basic and general feminist ideologies have been applied in single poet studies, such as on Forough Farrokhzad and Simin Behbahani, there is almost no record of consistently feminist study approaches to women's poetry in Iran. Most of the studies are based on linguistic, autobiographical or historical overviews, using both anecdotal and literary methods. Some of the issues raised in these studies could be further elaborated with additional readings of feminist theories, particularly to demonstrate the presence of poetic voice and issues of subjectivity (Hosseini, 2016: 1-3).²

Critics such as Milani, Talattof, Karimi-Hakkak and Ahmad Abu-Mahbub engaged with both female and male writers – poets and novelists – in their work.

² See also in: Katarzyna Szopa, Mahrokhshadat Hosseini. (2015) *Granice Kobiecej Poezji Iranskiej* (Poison Border of the Poetry of Iran). ArtPapier.

However, this research focuses only on female poets. This study offers an exclusive, cohesive insight into Persian women's literature since it concentrates on only one genre, poetry, and will not consider examples from other literary genres, such as novels. Critics such as Milani, Talattof, Karimi-Hakkak and Ahmad Abu-Mahbub offer penetrating observations regarding these poets' aesthetic theories, their use of point of view and their poetic method. I appreciate their guidance in formulating my own views. However, there is still a persistent need for a systematic and comprehensive theoretical approach to women's poetry in dialogical³ terms, and a consideration of the ethical⁴ questions in literature that relate to women in Iran. Many Muslim, Islamic and secular feminist groups in Iran experienced a problematic relationship despite similarities in their procedures. Ziba Mir-Hosseini argues that women in Iran who adopted principles and ties to feminism have experienced a constant struggle as Muslim women since secular feminism argues that women's emancipation is impossible under a theocratic government as observed in Iran. The Muslim aspect of their identity is sometimes described by scholars as oppressed while their feminist identification is perceived as "progressive and emancipated," yet as religious people they reject this negative characterisation (Mir-Hosseini, 1999:14). I believe an approach concerning a woman's ability to establish herself as an independent subjectivity can be more effective in overcoming such problems.

³ Irigaray refers to two epistemological models in conceptualising ethics: 'monological' versus 'dialogical' consciousness. Irigaray stresses on the dialogical model of the two rather than the monological mode of the one (one is man and the other is woman who is an autonomous and different subject [I] (1993:48). The monological model of subjectivity according to Irigaray is historically masculine and the one does not take the other seriously since he views the other as 'things' to be exploited. Irigaray endorses the paradigmatic model of two autonomous and different subjectivities, masculine and feminine, in order to ensure and promote dialogue and intersubjectivity to facilitate their coexistence.

⁴ For Irigaray, the psychoanalytic gesture is the start of an ethical relation to the other and not conventional meanings of ethics. Irigaray's text *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* is devoted to this theme. She believes that it is unethical that women have not had access to subjectivity, and that the universals of our culture have been dominated by a male imaginary. She says that ethics requires that men and women understand themselves as embodied subjects. She argues in her text that men and women must work together to learn to respect the irreducible difference between them. Women must become full subjects, and men must recognise that they are embodied. For example, based on her ethical gesture her theories of ethical love relationships are based in respect for alterity and creativity outside of reproduction.

Scope, Aims and Basic Approach

In this thesis I study the question of ethical subjectivity in the work of Iranian female poets, whose poems, I believe, are imbued with dialogical elements and ethical tones. I show how the concept of “dialogic subjectivity” or “duality of subjectivity” acknowledges ethical questions in their poetry, e.g. the importance of situating oneself in the other’s stance, the challenging of binary oppositions, responsibility towards the other and the interpretation of feminine and masculine relations. In this respect, the monologist understanding of subjectivity in Iranian women’s poetry is exchanged for an appreciation of interaction between subjects. Iranian female poets, through their poetry, transgress several socio-cultural boundaries. The strategy of women in both spaces is the same: to become more visible, to raise their voice, to resist and to create a new identity not far off from their self.

In other words, I will show how the Iranian women poets in question attempt to promote ethical relations between human subjects in their feminine writing. I discuss how their poems criticise a tradition that does not recognise the presence of two different subjects and is not concerned enough about ethics in relations between subjects. I then show how the poems can be analysed in terms of Irigarayian themes concerning a woman’s ability to establish herself as an independent subject. In other words, I will show how Irigaray’s division of work to three phases can be used to open up and explore the poetry: the first phase is to criticise the auto-monocentrism of the symbolic subject, the second is to define a second subject, and the third is to define a relationship or an ethic between the two different subjects. I will focus to show how they started to reform and rethink gender, as well as how they opened the doors to dialogism. Finally, I demonstrate how the poets approach a positive definition of relations, dialogic in essence, and as Irigaray points out, “[this new definition can favour ethical relations between man and woman, this relation representing the most basic and universal place where ethics must be exercised in order that it could become effective in all human relations in difference” (Irigaray and Marder, 2015: 255). This argument connects Iranian women poets’ literary politics and Irigaray’s philosophical (ethical) position in the sense that they both involve literary and ethical approaches to expose the suppressed status of the other in a largely phallogocentric world.

Luce Irigaray has been extensively discussed in feminist literary philosophy in the context of *L'écriture féminine*⁵, a term coined by Hélène Cixous in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), meaning literally “feminine writing”. Using Lacan’s ideas that the structure of language is centered by the Phallus and that language within the Symbolic Order is representational, where a single signifier is connected to a single signified. But under the influence of poststructuralism’s emphasis on subjectivity as a written and stylistic phenomenon, the ethical approach to literature began to re-examine the subject as a social being. The Bakhtinian conception of dialogism⁶ is an important contribution to this reconsideration, since it enables study of subjectivity as an ethical relationship, through the presence of the voice of the other. An alternative to the monologist understanding of narration is the re-articulation of the concept of the voice, so that narration is understood as an ethical relationship, through the presence of the voice of the other. Irigaray further enriched Bakhtin’s concept of otherness (Bakhtin and Emerson, 1984: 283) by introducing the concept of sexual difference. This is an additional means for Irigaray, and an inspiration for this thesis, to challenge monocentrism.

The practice of women’s writing shares common features with dialogic subjectivity. The most important characteristic is the relationship between the self and the other. Women’s writing desires the setting up of an ethical relationship through literary expression. Irigaray (1985) agrees with Cixous that there needs to be a feminine language, which she calls “woman speak”. Irigaray believes that it is not helpful to write in a language which is a product of patriarchal society. Cixous describes how “there is hidden and always already in woman the source; the locus for the other” (1976: 875). Cixous here uses the metaphoric concepts of the womb and the text. She asks women to employ women’s writing, *écriture féminine* to give new meaning to the “locus” or womb. Irigaray (1985: 181) in the same manner asks women to employ a type of writing that will resist the monologic nature of patriarchy and create a link relating self

⁵ The concept reflects the relationship between the cultural and psychological inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text by French feminists such as Kristeva and Cixous in the early 1970s. See Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (1989) for more details.

⁶ The underlying principle in Bakhtin’s dialogism is mainly on discussing the monologic domination in literature (Irene Rima Makaryk, 1993), which silenced the histories of the marginalised. Instead monologic discourse is seen as being able to open up to dialogism in order to allow alternate voices to be heard. He asserts that dialogism and polyphony does not uproot monologism, instead it allows them to co-exist and support the old monologic form. See Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (2010) for more details.

and other. This relationship would help to re-position the self and the other in a dialogic approach.

An implication of the foregoing discussion is that there is no tension between the questions of ethics (voicing the other) and subversion (going against patriarchy), and that ideas of ethical relations, subjectivity and women's writing are intertwined. As mentioned by Irigaray, in order to prevent "master-slave relations", we need to develop a place for "recognition" (Irigaray and Marder, 2015: 19). Irigaray states: "we have to practice a sort of recognition between us that differs from hierarchy, and somehow from genealogy" (ibid). An acknowledgement of the sexually different other, according to Irigaray, has the potential to do this. I will demonstrate how the poets under discussion recognise sexual difference and subjectivity in their poems, and discuss whether they are successful in signifying the recognition of the 'other'. Irigaray stresses that the "universal place of otherness has to be respected in order to respect the other kinds of otherness becoming possible" (ibid).

Contribution to Knowledge

The present study makes a contribution to existing knowledge and proposes a fresh evaluation of contemporary Iranian women's poetry. This research adopts a feminist theoretical context to observe the shift in women's poetry from the concept of *sharm*⁷ (self-erasure) to more feminist themes. I am contributing towards an original body of knowledge since this research looks at the nuances of the relationship between femininity and masculinity, and offers a "self-enunciation" of the female other in the context of Iranian culture. Accordingly, my analysis of dominant notions of sexuality will be made through a selection of women's poetry from the constitutional revolution (1905) to the present day (2016).

An Irigarayan Intervention in the Rhetoric of Women's Poetry

Talattof's (2000) Bakhtinian conception of subjectivity makes an important contribution to this reconsideration, since it enables us to study subjectivity as an ethical relationship,

⁷ The concept of 'sharm' in Iranian culture applies typically to women and it is recognised as a modest characteristic for women to achieve. According to Rouhi Shafii in *Scent of Saffron* (1997), the concept involves both an internal state and an external behaviour. It is associated with feelings of embarrassment, shyness or self-restraint and a women's public self-erasure. In this research, I will apply self-erasure meaning of the concept to imply denotations of her captivity in phallogocentric order.

through the presence of the voice of the other. An alternative to the monologist understanding of narration is a re-articulation of the concept of the voice so that narration is understood as an ethical relationship. For Bakhtin, word has a two-sided aspect. It identifies the mutual relationship between addresser and addressee. Bakhtin believes both addresser and addressee (speaker and listener) have one shared territory that is a word. Language has impact and impression on all aspects of life and dialogism is a fundamental element of language. Bakhtin confirms that “language embodies an on-going dialogic clash of ideologies, world-views, opinions, and interpretations” (Allen 2000: 28). Dialogism is a term that proposes different prospects and views enclosed firmly in a single entity. This single entity examines its surroundings with shifting points of view or an “excess of seeing” (Bakhtin et al., 1990: 21-23). Dialogism for Bakhtin not only has meaning in literature but also in all aspects of one’s life. Bakhtin imagines all of life as a progressing unfinalised dialogue. The interaction happens at all stages of one’s life. Therefore, the dialogic pattern is in every aspect of individuals’ existence. Bakhtin believes: “The dialogic nature of consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself, the single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue” (Bakhtin and Emerson, 1984: 293). Bakhtin insists on the acknowledgement of the other to form meaning. More specifically, for him the truth cannot be captured through monologism. Bakhtin states: “Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (ibid). Thus, acknowledgement of the other voices is a unique and characteristic element of dialogism. Bakhtinian dialogic reading of women’s writing welcomes the involvement of a multiplicity of different voices within the sources (e.g. multiple voices from different characters in a poem). While Talattof used Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue as a means to explore the ways in which women convey rebellious meaning in their narration, I will mainly borrow my methodology from Luce Irigaray and will survey the poets’ use of Irigaray’s techniques in order to ameliorate the situation of women in Iranian culture. I choose an ethical or dialogic reading over a monological reading in the poetry selection.

Overall, this study is an attempt to signal how Irigaray’s work provides a useful insight into the broader context of Iranian women’s poetry. In this respect, this study will address the question of duality of subjectivity and will reconsider Irigaray’s deconstructive techniques, in the hope that they can contribute to an exploration of the

way in which Iranian women poets deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations in their writing, and how they show their resistance against the individual and social confinements of each period of the women's literary movement in Iran. Irigarayian ethics focuses on the ethical subject's relation to the self and to the other. I stress that ethics need to be understood as a relationship between this self and other. Irigaray's ethics of sexual difference outlines a revolution in ethics which calls for the transformation of these relations. She maintains that relations need to be mediated, but not according to the present symbolic supremacy of the male phallus.

Luce Irigaray is a prominent figure in twentieth-century feminist literary theory. However, Irigaray's work has not been broadly applied in relation to the poetry produced by Iranian women. She is regularly viewed in terms of "French feminism" or "*écriture féminine*". However, there are considerable differences between her work and that of others such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous or Michelle Montrelay. Specifically, Irigaray's work considers how the "symbolic order" has traditionally weakened the subjectivity of women through its insistence on controlling and refuting the female voice in culture, language and subjectivity. Another important difference between other critics and Irigaray is that she does not argue for a writing of the female body; she argues for the need to speak the feminine, to articulate it and to give it room for enunciation. To speak the feminine is more influential for Irigaray because according to Irigaray feminine language is derived from the patriarchal pre-oedipal period of fusion between mother and child (Irigaray, 1989:132). Kristeva termed Irigaray's imagery the semiotic (Appignanesi et al., 1995: 80). Poetry arguably provides a cultural arena in which to begin to explore these ideas and to put them into practice. Irigaray's work thus becomes apposite to the challenge laid down by Butler (Stone, 2006: 52-86) to find new ways of approaching the seemingly vexed question of the relationship between women, the feminine and poetry.

This research is thus partly on the relevance of Irigaray's work to Iranian feminist poetry and criticism, beginning with the question of what is to be understood by the phrase "feminine dialogic subjectivity", and how this can open up the study of the poetry. The research sets out to deal with the content and form of the poems in order to emphasise the importance of revising the theorisation of the feminine in the poetry. I suggest this approach is vital not just to an understanding of Irigaray's ideas, but to my own approach to Irigaray's thought as it relates to the question of female subjectivity.

By exercising Luce Irigaray's perception of sexual difference, my evaluation goes a step further in exploring feminine identity.

In *The Way of Love* (2002) and *Sharing the World* (2008) Luce Irigaray suggests a vision of a new kind of dialogue between sexuate subjects that would revitalise our experience of language, knowledge and human relationships. Indeed, she writes in *The Way of Love* that such dialogue cannot speak of "something or someone who already exists, and is even already in the past, or put into the past by what is said. The task here is different. It is a question of making something to exist, in the present and even more in the future" (Irigaray, 2002: viii). This kind of language, which would allow the unfolding of that which does not yet exist, corresponds, for Irigaray, to the attempt to cultivate an unprecedented relationship between two human subjects, in which the foremost task is to "listen to the present speaking of the other in its irreducible difference with a view to the way through which we could correspond to it in faithfulness to ourselves" (ibid: xi). This thesis is aimed at developing an interpretation of such an emerging ethical vision in the work of the poets' language. In a recent article, "Ethical Gestures toward the Other", Irigaray states: "I could say that, from the beginning, the aim of my work is to try to favor ethical relations between human beings. A thing that proves impossible in a culture or tradition in which the subject appears as neuter or neutral" (Irigaray and Marder, 2015: 3).

Moreover, Irigaray claims that in the Western metaphysical tradition 'woman' has been ascribed a marginal position as a consequence of the masculine repression of its other, so as to guarantee both its authority and the identity of the male subject. This conception of the repressive practices of the dominant masculine economy, its mode of subject constitution, and the subsequent removal of woman to a site of exteriority, along with the transgressive discursive strategies she develops there, is to provide the theoretical context in which to analyse the poems. On the grounds that will be rationalised throughout this research, a holistic application of Irigaray's concepts can offer the most effective way of examining the relations that shape the settings of the selected poems, and make constructive relations between the poets and their work possible. Irigaray's deconstructive method can be used as a means to explore the way in which women deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations in Iran as my critical analysis's reference point.

It can therefore be assumed that an Irigarayian reading can be applied to Iranian feminist poetry in order to explore women's poetic voices. Irigaray's feminist theories

have concerns regarding the silent voices as well as the oppressed and marginalised ‘others’ formed by patriarchal authorities. Multiplicity is addressed by feminism’s heterogeneity and it provides opportunities for dialogue. The research from this project will become an asset to the established body of literature on women’s issues in Iran. It will also reinforce the poets and writers to build their strategies of resistance within their writing and this would help fulfil the Irigarayan dream of utopia.

Research Questions

This research intends to explore representations of gender in contemporary Iranian women’s poetry, how and to what extent such images have changed women’s representation in Persian poetry over time and, finally, how women’s experience of identity is informed by the poetry produced by women in Iran. Accordingly, my three main research questions are:

1. What aspects of gender issues are present in Iranian women’s poetry?
2. In what context is women’s poetry produced, or how do different power structures, religious beliefs and social values stimulate the representation of specific gender issues in women’s poetry?
3. How does Irigaray’s literary approach contribute to exploring the way in which the selected Iranian women poets deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations in their poetry?

Methodology

This research is feminist critical research. It is qualitative, interdisciplinary and formulative in nature, and based in primary and secondary data. The study contributes to several areas of existing scholarship on gender and sexuality, on Persian literature, as well as on feminist literary cultural studies. The material is chosen from the selected poets’ poetry selection from the three distinct phases: the constitutional period (1906-1922), the Pahlavi era (1925-1979) and the period following the 1979 revolution. I mainly borrow my approach from the work of Irigaray and will survey the poets’ use of techniques for shifting the situation of women in Iranian culture. I will choose an ethical or dialogic reading over a monological reading, with a preference for Irigaray’s concept of subjectivity in the poetry selection. As explained in the previous paragraphs, mimesis, strategic essentialism, utopian ideals, and employing novel language are some

of the techniques central to this poetry and its attempts to change contemporary culture and highlight ethical relations.

My argument is that resisting or deconstructing patriarchal discourse is essentially the goal of the selected poets. My argument connects Iranian women poets' literary politics and Irigaray's philosophical (ethical) position in the sense that they mutually involve literary and ethical approaches to work in the concealed space of the other in a phallogocentric world. I will study how the poets establish an ethics of sexual difference in their poems. They represent dialogical subjectivity in their poems by showing the need to change traditional society. They show how women need to establish new values that correspond to their creative capacities. The poets' resistance recognises society, culture and discourse as sexuate and not as the monopoly on universal value of a single (male) sex. This study will observe the dialogue in women's writing in Iran and its relation to particular historical periods. An analysis of the social and political forces behind the discourse incorporated into the text will be carried out. This analysis will also help to achieve an understanding of the literary thematic shift of the poets' discourse. Discussing women's activities in each era has a crucial role and function in women's discourse analysis.

I will explain the selected poets' resistance to patriarchal norms through emphasising the poets' identification and illustration of the female voice which is frequently marginalised and veiled in Iran. As stated by Jacobs, any feminist dialogic reading must be carefully "historicised", bearing in mind the context and culture in which it was written (1991: 80). The historical and cultural context of each era emphasises dialogue and the exchange of ideas through women's discourse. This study will prepare the ground for discussions of the subversive discourse that is present throughout the undercurrents of women's literature from the constitutional revolution to the post-revolutionary period. Women's literary creativity in Iran has been inspired and conditioned by socio-political issues.

In all the cases presented the issue of women's silenced voices and the responses of women activists to this issue will be analysed. The study will discuss the women's movements and the feminist consciousness in Iran in each period. I will then be able to apply Irigaray's theories to assess the poems' language. For example, Irigaray claims that women have been traditionally reduced to matter and nature, at the expense of an autonomous female subject position. Although women can become subjects if they fit in to male subjectivity, an individual subject position for women cannot fully develop in

these circumstances. The selected poets' aims, very similar to Irigaray, are to unveil the absence of a female subject position, the degrading of the feminine to nature/matter, and, finally, the absence of true sexual difference in Iranian culture.

Analytical Framework

The argument that Irigaray is in the realm of *écriture féminine* results from the complex style adopted in her work and her 'writing the body', as well as her focus on the issue of language and her own style of writing. For example, to gain self-consciousness for women, Irigaray presents arguments regarding women's bodies and women's sexual pleasure. She believes women experience multiplicity in their sexuality, for instance, from the "two lips" of the vulva. She argues that this diffused sexuality cannot be articulated or conceived within the traditions of phallogentric discourse. For, she believes, "I am a unified, coherent being, and what is significant in the world reflects my male image" (1985: 7). Female sexuality for Irigaray is a medium to interpret women's pleasure, *jouissance*, that cannot be expressed by the dominant, ordered, "logical," masculine language. She argues that:

Woman has sex organs just about everywhere. She experiences pleasure almost everywhere [...] The geography of her pleasure is much more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is imagined-in an imaginary [system] centred a bit too much on one and the same. (ibid)

Irigaray maintains that transforming this order will not be achieved by itself: "For a woman to arrive at the point where she can enjoy her pleasure as a woman, a long detour by the analysis of the various systems that oppress her is certainly necessary" (ibid: 9).

In her *Key Writings* (2004) Irigaray claims that a subject's shifting from an exterior to interior understanding of his or her self and desire can generate an independence and self-enunciation of 'I'. The interior self can be elaborated through the development of multifaceted feeling, which stresses the impact of "attentiveness to oneself" as well as notions of "breathing", "listening" and "silence" (Irigaray, 2004: 137-139).

The concept of enunciation can be used to resist the linguistic approach of the symbolic order to self-enunciate women in the poetry. Self-enunciation in the symbolic order means considering masculine identity as an ideal subject in contrast to others. It neglects the feminine other and it does not include the representation of the female

subject. Therefore, it is essential to question the feminine other's subject position in the poems in order to prevent discounting women from claiming the subject in discourse. Irigaray argues that our culture has not yet developed a dialectical relation with the self-representation of 'I' and the difference of two has been neglected. Self-enunciation for Irigaray is represented in three realities:

A real corresponding to the masculine subject, a real corresponding to the feminine subject, and a real corresponding to their relation. These three reals thus each correspond to a world but these three worlds are in interaction. They never appear as proper in the sense of independent of each other. (Irigaray, 2002:111)

Bainbridge, in defining Irigaray's 'enunciation', explains that the term should be interpreted in relation to its equivalent, "the énoncé" (Bainbridge, 2008: 10). She claims that: "The énoncé refers to the statement itself, what is actually said, to the language itself. Enunciation, by contrast, refers to the process that produces the statement, to how something is said or how the position from which it emanates might be understood" (ibid). Bainbridge concludes that, for Irigaray, the stress on enunciation draws attention to her interest in feminine language that has the ability to articulate and enunciate her subject position. This is because women in writing have limited room for manoeuvre in their representation of self (ibid). Irigaray maintains that: "one of the means through which thought is communicated in the late twentieth century is alphabetical writing. So I use it to communicate even though I think that it is a means that constitutes a limit on what I have to say, particularly as a woman" (Jardine et al., 1991: 97-98).

In addition, insisting on placing Irigaray as the advocate of *écriture féminine* seems irrelevant when a key element of her theory contends that written language confines the feminine to a phallogocentric perspective. This kind of system reduces women to their exchange value, ignoring and not valuing their natural qualities. I consider Irigaray's work not as an attempt to 'write the body'. Moreover, she insists on discovering a form of articulation for women, '*parler femme*'. According to Irigaray, this is an important mechanism for women and it is related to issues of language and enunciation. Irigaray's '*parler femme*' in this study indicates a desire to rebuild traditional models of sexed subjectivity in order to construct the female subject in discourse and language. My intention in highlighting Irigaray's philosophical, psychoanalytical and linguistic work is firstly to stress defining a meaning for and articulating a gendered subject, and secondly to recreate those elements of the feminine that are ignored in subjectivity in the traditional discourse of Persian literature.

Therefore, similar to Irigaray's work, the study concentrates on discovering a form of articulation for women and I identify sexual difference as a difference in the rhythmic pattern of some female bodies that is cyclical and irreversible and not linear or punctuated like men's bodies.

Irigaray as Deconstructionist⁸

During the last few decades Luce Irigaray's work has been studied from several standpoints. Her writings have been analysed both by those feminists agreeing with her work and by those who are more critical of her understanding of philosophy and psychoanalysis. The diversity of perceptions of Irigaray's work results in the classification of her work according to four attitudes: Irigaray as a biological essentialist, Irigaray as anti-feminist, Irigaray as deconstructionist and Irigaray as heterosexist. In this research, I am more interested in the deconstructionist element in Irigaray's work. I acknowledge Irigaray's methodology of revealing the repressive mechanisms present in the socio-symbolic order, mechanisms that deny the female subject. A key element in her theory contends that written language confines the feminine in a phallogocentric logos. Although I am fully aware of the possible essentialist, anti-feminist and other charges against Irigaray's work, in this research I stress Irigaray as deconstructionist, rather than focusing on the other charges against her thought.

Irigaray's critique of Western philosophies and deconstructing the symbolic order are influential and helpful. This research does not suggest that Irigaray is a truly inclusive theorist and also her ideas cannot provide a reading of all aspects of the poetry. However, since deconstructing stereotypes from within is the aim of Irigaray's work, her thoughts can be linked to Persian women's poetry, composed from 1905 to 2016, as an approach aimed at uncovering masculine phallogocentric practices and their method for the elimination of the female subject in the patriarchal culture.

Finally, in this research, Irigaray's intentions in her philosophical, psychoanalytical and linguistic work are used firstly to stress the definition of a

⁸ Deconstruction as a strategy is a kind of philosophical, critical and social practice aimed at rethinking the world. Irigaray within this strategy attacks the hegemonic foundationalism that lies at the base of Western thought. Irigaray's deconstruction of female identity within a phallogocentric culture is in the heart of her philosophy and it is signalled in her essay, *This Sex which is not One*. This sex (the feminine) which is not a sex (since the masculine is expressed as the only one in our culture) and the phallus acted as its signifier. Irigaray deconstruct the whole stereotype and argues that this sex is not defined by phallic wholeness but rather it is multiple, fluid and excessive (Irigaray, 1980).

meaning for an articulating gendered subject, and secondly to recreate those elements of the female subject that are excluded in the traditional discourse of Persian poetry. There are not enough studies that use Irigaray in connection with any theoretical, linguistic, spiritual and artistic practices in Persian literature, specifically in relation to women's work. This thesis sets out to use Irigaray's thought in relation to a survey of Iranian women's poetry. Such a survey will demonstrate in particular these authors' success and progress in the face of tradition.

Moreover, in hoping to develop a gender-neutral point of view studies in Iran, I believe Luce Irigaray could offer more contribution to current politically controlled feminist movements in Iran. These feminists' activities are mostly suppressed and not authorised by the state. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in honour of Iranian mother's day, March 19th 2017, tweeted his views on gender issues that gender equality is a "Zionist plot" aiming to corrupt the role of women in society. In his twitter he claimed Iranians should resist feminist ideas and instead hold the Prophet Mohamed's daughter Fatimah as their ideal.

Irigaray in the final chapter of Gianni Vattimo's book on "Deconstructing Zionism. A Critique of Political Metaphysics," does pose the question as to whether the feminine practice of hospitality represents a value to be considered and extended outside the family and asks: "[w]ould current conflicts, in particular the Arab-Israeli conflict, be possible if feminine hospitality would spread into and shape civil life? And does not a world culture require such an evolution?" (Vattimo and Marder, 2013: 176) These are plainly difficult questions to satisfactorily answer but a key element in Irigaray's theory to insist on can be cultivating a feminine culture and a dialogic exchange with the other. Irigaray instead of sharing her views on Zionist conflict in Vattimo's book reminds her readers of the most important concern which is how to define a relationship or an ethic between the two different subjects. Irigaray is also so far from a feminist liberal tradition that seeks equality for women on the same terms traditionally accorded to men. Irigaray argues that women fall into the trap of the symbolic, as do men. But the phallogocentric view of the economy of the system enforces women to become male in order to claim their subject position. The symbolic system defined "outside" of the symbolic is madness. Therefore there is no chance for a woman to become the subject. Hilaire Barnett states that:

Equality with men in all fields of public life, for Irigaray such a demand is the equivalent to demanding that women become as

men; that the differences between women and men remain masked. These women cannot do, it is argued, for their identity would then be subsumed within the patriarchal order. (1998: 150)

This view can offer a peaceful momentum for both feminists and politicians in Iran to rethink gender or as Irigaray states to consider “sharing humanity towards peaceful coexistence in difference” instead of holding a blaming finger to each other (ibid: 169).

Poetic Writing and the Irigarayan Idea of Utopia

Issues of representation in Irigarayan readings are connected with subjectivity, genealogy and her analysis of the prevailing discourse, which values the traditional logos. Irigaray’s proposal of a feminine representational subject and her analysis of the phallogocentrism system are determined by our notions of what imagery is and how it can be represented. Although the writing of the feminine in textual practice has an important place in Irigaray’s work, there is also a definite concern to avoid writing that is represented and dominated within the masculine logos. Therefore, it is important to search for written texts which do not benefit the symbolic order and for this purpose poetic texts by women offer an ideal platform for this study.

Irigaray explains that duality of subjectivity has been disregarded in our cultural formations, and that subjectivity has been established on the ground of only one subject, masculinity. Irigaray, through her works, attempts to establish the culture of two, feminine and masculine. She believes poetic language of poetry is a form of dialogue that is more suitable than a “speculative” way of speaking. She writes that, in speculative language, “I talk the other’s language, using his grammatical and lexical norms” (Irigaray, 2004: 47). Poetry has the potential to be a platform to expose us to new horizons so that the culture of dialogic subjectivity can be established. This suggests that women need to create a feminine language to speak and to write, letting the masculine other “hear something of the mystery that I [women] represent for him” (ibid: 47). This will “allow him to avoid confusion or misrecognition [... and will] provide him with signs which permit him to safeguard the two and our dialogue” (ibid: 47). Therefore, poetry could offer a platform to challenge masculine grammar and the availability of another syntax which allows the articulation of female sexual desire within its diffusive language. In other words, Irigaray’s stress on articulating the feminine resonates with individual potentials of the poetic text that deconstruct the

representation of traditional imagery. Poetic language is more expressive than speculative language and the poet has the freedom to rearrange the lines, poetic diction and rhythm without considering their grammatical order. Poetry in Iran according to Soroudi has always been the main medium because: “Both educated and illiterate people were accustomed to the recitation of verse, which could, in a few words, summon emotions and channel them in desired directions” (Soroudi, 1992: 214).

Irigaray has been personally involved in a certain degree of poetic writing and analysis. In her poetry selection *Everyday Prayers* (2004), she proposes literary writing as a functional practice to disorder the fixed structures of western discourse. Her happiness in her writing of poems is correlated with nature. She confirms that “The poetic writing that I try to practice seeks to preserve and promote a *phuein*, a becoming, which does not divide itself from nature” (Irigaray, 2004: 30). In her poetry Irigaray acknowledges that writing eliminates a “subjectivity” cultivated in the Western manner (ibid). In other words, writing, for Irigaray, means seeking not to conquer, but “to give, to transmit, to restore”. In order to emphasise the significance of the creative production of literature and its analytical assessment, Irigaray states that “words and gestures need to be invented – saying the divine that compels man to pursue his becoming” (Irigaray, 2012:65). These new words should be discovered to appropriate her own becoming. Perhaps this was the reason that inspired Irigaray to fill a number of poems with the rebirth of nature in springtime, which is the time of rebirth.

Moreover, Irigaray persists in building the culture of two subjects, masculine and feminine, in her poetry. She insists that acknowledging the belief that we are different subjects “unveils a horizon or discovers a source for speech” (ibid). In order to recognise each other in language as irreducible others, the individuality of two different subjects and the dialogic relationship between them, Irigaray offers the practice of listening. She states: “We have to listen and to keep listening in ourselves in order to situate ourselves differently with respect to the world, to the self, to the other” (ibid). She asserts that this recognition cannot be seen if women only occupy the subject position (Irigaray, 1993:63). Writing in the form of poetry deploys an expressive and potentially disruptive language that broadens one’s imagination and ability to listen. It stimulates the emotions of readers. For Irigaray, writing poetry is discovering a source of insight and creativity that both inspires a becoming and energises the body. She believes that “the advantage of poetic writing, in my opinion, is that it does not separate form from matter. The spirit from the body?” (Irigaray, 2004: 29).

Irigaray's figurative language stretches the readers and listeners' standpoint and encourages them to respect the voice of the other, alongside their own voice. The rhythm of her poetry offers a renewal and transformation of its words and figures. Irigaray calls this transformation a "vital energy", and she believes: "To succeed in transforming one's vital energy and one's cultural energy into a free energy, available, not already determined nor finalised, would be for me the characteristic of a human being" (Cited in: Miller & Cimitile, 2007: 61). Poetry, therefore, for Irigaray, has the potential to achieve this vital energy through words that can touch the heart, because it is dialogic, shared with the other, and has the capability to transform beliefs. Irigaray argues that this transformation entails connecting and communicating with the other in a transcendent position (Irigaray, 2004: 35).

There are not any studies that use Irigaray in connection with any theoretical, linguistic, spiritual and artistic practices in Persian literature, specifically in relation to women's work. This thesis sets out to use Irigaray's thoughts in relation to Iranian women's poetry. A survey of contemporary female poetry in Iran could offer us extra insight into the layers of meaning in women's poetry in Iran.

While various chronotopes are present within the plots of the poems, this research will concentrate on a central, dominant one: the time-space matrix of the female poets' era. How do the literary movements and historical contexts interact with, and modify the poems? In order to answer this, I will explore the Iranian women's movements of the constitution period, and review the shifts and transformations in women's discourse due to post-revolutionary principles that affected the writing of women, inspiring a shift from traditional Islamic literary themes to feminist themes.

This dialogic reading of Iranian women's writing in a male-dominated society shows how these women attempted to challenge and undermine the monologic world of patriarchy through different structures of transgression. The selected poetry questions the dominant patriarchal speech genres of Iranian literature which position women only as the 'other', as well as the silenced division of this society. A dialogic reading of their poetry illustrates how the authors' ideas are symbolised in the aesthetic form of a poem. The poets make the reader think about the self as well as the other's interpretations and voices. This prepares the ground for dialogic subjectivity. The reader can then question the peculiarity of the self's language (its words), or as Talattof says, "Iranian culture", which justifies violence against women and continues to support the violator (Talattof, 1997: xii).

The poems celebrate different ideologies and voices. The ideas and voices are articulated by the characters and even a single female voice has an equal right to become the heroine of the poem. The reader does not encounter a dominant authorial voice. Reading the women's discourse in a male-dominated society as a heteroglot text means analysing the various languages from different cultural aspects, as well as the author, characters and scenes communicated within the text. The selected poems in this project speak and enjoy a diversity of voices: the voices of the poor and expelled, the voices of a dictator and superiority, the voices of the victim and the sufferer, the voices of the holy and the spiritual, the voices of the elite and marginal, the voices of celebration and laughter, the voices of the oppressed and discouraged, the voices of different age groups and genders. The voices reveal to their readership the complexities of women's sufferings after the revolution within the patriarchal social context. Each voice carries its own socio-ideological meaning, its own truth about the world. However, each voice at the same time participates in a diversity of communications. Heterogeneity proposes a method of distinguishing the female voice amongst the many within a poem. In this manner, it unveils the value of women's writing and how the poets use the feminine discourse to establish their alternative authority.

The Irigarayan idea of utopia can also be traced in the selected poems. By creating Bakhtinian carnival scenes in the poems, the poets turn life into a dialogic space, reverse or alter conventions and traditions, make life spontaneous, and welcome the existence of many voices. These poems create a temporary utopian atmosphere (promised by Irigaray) that allows the interaction between all people from different religious dogmas or social hierarchy within the text. These writers enable their readers to escape from religious and hierarchical boundaries and, temporarily, enjoy the freedom from the hegemony of the regime and its conventional rules for women. The concept of carnival in their writing welcomes a multiplicity of human beliefs and experiences; it represents a polyphony of voices, in which every voice and belief has an equal viewpoint with the other. The selected poets in this research will celebrate different voices in their poems, particularly the voice of the invisible, silent and marginalised women who are oppressed by the dictated rules established for women regarding their veiled voices.

Irigaryian Approaches

Irigaray offers several approaches (which will be explicitly unfolded during the research) to oppose to masculine authority over language and to reverse the negative image of women:

1. One approach is mimesis or mimicry. In mimicry, women imperfectly imitate stereotypes about women produced for them by men. Deconstructing the stereotypes from within is the aim of mimicry. Mimesis suggests that women should express their language (writing) in a teasing manner, from the position appointed to them by the symbolic order of men (1985: 76).
2. Irigaray also resists masculine authority through her argument of a duality of subjectivities and the self-enunciation of the female 'I', which has been discussed in previous paragraphs. The women poets in this study seek to create their poems from their own female subject position and thus to express their feminine enunciation of 'I' through their poetry.
3. A further medium for Irigaray to resist masculine authority over language and to reverse the negative image of women is through cultivating female desire (*jouissance*) or illustrating female erotic associational movements in women's writing. For Irigaray, female sexual desire cannot be articulated by the dominant symbolic order, which is created by masculine language. She sees female desire as more multiple than masculine phallic desire. Irigaray asserts that woman has sex organs just about everywhere; that, as a result, feminine language is more diffusive than its "masculine counterpart" (1985: 103). She continues: "That is undoubtedly the reason [...] her language [...] goes off in all directions and [...] he is unable to discern the coherence" (ibid: 131).

For example, the poems in this study do not stick to a linear narrative movement: beginning, middle, and end. Rather, their lines are connected to each other like the pattern of female desire; each line sometimes changes the narrative by erotic groups of words, or it has multiple beginnings, succinct diction, fragmented sentences, and illogical reasoning as well as a resistance to fixed definitions and positions.

4. Irigaray overcomes phallic language by breaking with grammatical and lexical norms. She argues that the valorisation of man and elimination of woman is evident in the language of the symbolic order, and she deals with the structure of such discourse as follows:

The articulation of the reality of my sex is impossible in discourse, and for a structural, eidetic reason. My sex is removed, at least as the property of a subject, from the predicative mechanism that assures discursive coherence. (1985: 148-149)

To challenge masculine grammar Irigaray invites us to consider “another ‘syntax,’ another ‘grammar’ of culture” (1985: 143). Irigaray insists that, between man and woman, there exists otherness and this otherness is “biological, morphological and relational” (1996: 61). The new syntax to consider, according to Irigaray, requires no classification of the female subject. Irigaray did an extensive study on language and her work covers different methodological studies, including areas of speech, grammar and syntax. For example, in *I Love to You*, Irigaray accumulates a detailed analysis from her subjects’ responses to questions (ibid: 14).

Moreover, in *Speculum*, Irigaray challenges words and meanings in order to make other interpretations possible. She wants to show that “the other is not in fact neuter, either grammatically or semantically [...] and [it] is no longer possible to use the same words indiscriminately for the masculine and feminine” (ibid: 61). Explicitly, in her analysis, she shows how the usage of ‘I’ as subject is more prevalent for men than women who prefer “you/the other” (ibid: 65). Irigaray calls for the valorisation of the two different pronouns (he/she). To cultivate this mission, she suggests that the “I-woman” as ‘she’ should be “valorised as a pole of intentionality between she and she, I-she and she-herself” (ibid: 67).

In deploying Irigarayan syntax modality to women’s poetry in Iran, my reading will demonstrate how the lines experience breaks with grammatical convention. For example, many lines in the poems lack a subject or a helping verb to complete the past participle. Moreover, my reading will show how the fragmented lines in the poems break the linear grammatical pattern of subject/verb/object and consequently feature the pattern of female desire. Each line resists this logical movement either within the line itself, or without, in its connection to the lines that appear before or after it. My analysis will indicate how individual poetic diction (words) or expressions resist conventional and committed meanings. Signifiers avoid fixed meanings and multiplicity in the meaning of words is further noticeable. The use of adverbs, the future tense and open-ended lines will also be evaluated.

Nevertheless, the desire for consistency of language is denied by the relation of the lines to one another. Carnival and the grotesque are two literary modes that poets

employ to destabilise and liberate the expectations of the dominant style or impressions and beliefs through humour and chaos. They allow the poets and their readership to distance themselves from the dominant entities and feelings existing in the culture. This allows the poets discussed here to deal with the painful issues of femininity. Carnival and the grotesque are suitable means for the selected Iranian feminist poets to go against traditional stereotypes and undermine those concepts and present their own realities.

A close analysis of these poets' works will reveal characteristics and images of the grotesque and carnival that allow the poets to explore the space between reality and fantasy (utopia), a place they often like to write about. These elements allow the poets to explore real life's boundaries and restrictions on women's subjectivity, and finally to find that such restrictions are more transparent than we might consider.

5. According to Irigaray, while it is essential to change defined cultural values through language, in the same way it is critical to deal with the challenging nature of different relationships among women, particularly the mother-daughter relationship. In *I Love to You* (1996) Irigaray stresses that in order to discover "the singularity and universality of love as the natural and spiritual realisation of human identity" (1996: 26), we need to reconsider the relationship between man and woman. However, "the changes to be made in mother-daughter relationships are connected to this transformation of relations between the two genders of the human species" (ibid).

Consistent with Irigaray's ideas, our mythological discourses are imaginary "landscapes" which are established as phallic law (1993: 159). They have weakened the relationship between mother and daughter. They have also defined certain roles for women, such as daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. In *Je, tu, nous* (1993) Irigaray proposes techniques to deploy for improving the relationship between mother and daughter. For instance, exposing images of the mother and daughter together, or deliberately stressing the subjectivity of each of them. Therefore, language can be once again considered as a medium through which to reconsider a relationship, this time the relationship between mother and daughter. It is essential for women to create a "house of language" [*langue*], a place that they can practice living and articulating so they can

accomplish their self-enunciation and the “sensible transcendental”⁹ (1984: 105). Creating this kind of language, according to Irigaray, is a poetic performance.

Irigaray’s Oeuvre Divisions

Moreover, it is suggested in this study that Iranian women poets’ style forms a parallel relation with Irigaray’s three phase’s division of oeuvre. According to an interview in the feminist journal *Hypatia*, Irigaray’s work can be studied in three phases: “the first a critique, you might say, of the auto-mono-centrism of the western subject; the second, how to define a second subject; and the third phase, how to define a relationship, a philosophy, an ethic, a relationship between two different subjects” (Olson, 1995: 145). Iranian women’s poetry can also be studied in these three phases. These divisions are a very useful guide to understand the persistent development of thought in Iranian women’s poetry. These phases or continual shifts will show that the poets’ central aim is to stress the importance of the need to replace the duality of subjects for the one in sexual difference.

More explicitly, the first phase consists of Irigaray’s critical approach to philosophy and psychoanalytic theory. Her work in this phase demonstrates the elimination of women by the Western system, as she questions and condemns the “theoretical machinery” of the Western system that neutralises gender in its writings. *Speculum of the Other Woman*, which was published in 1974 (translated into English in 1985), is in this phase. *Speculum* was well received in France after its publication. Irigaray published her collected essays in *This Sex which is Not One* in 1977.

The second phase involves her work from 1980 to 1987. In this phase Irigaray still carried on with her critical approach, but she was also in search of ways to recognise the female subject. The most remarkable works in this phase are *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, published in 1984, and her essay collection *Sexes and Genealogies*, published in 1987. It was also in this period that she studied the tetralogy of the four

⁹ Sensible Transcendence for Irigaray is “no longer ecstasy, leaving the self for an inaccessibly absolutely other, beyond sensibility, beyond the earth. It is respect for the other whom I will never be, who is transcendent to me and to whom I am transcendent” (Irigaray, 2004: 9). For once we have come to understand each other as irreducibly embodied we can no longer reduce the other to our own stereotypes, reduce them to a representation within our symbolic: “the other in us must remain flesh, living, moving. Not transformed into some idea, no matter how ideal. Not reduced to some sleep, more or less lethal” (ibid: 31). Cultivating the sensible transcendental, therefore, implies the other is never again at our disposal.

elements. Related works in her research are *Marine Lover: Of Friedrich Nietzsche* in 1980 (Eng. trans. 1991 by Gillian C. Gill), *Elemental Passions* in 1982 (Eng. trans. 1992) and *The Forgetting of Air: In Martin Heidegger* in 1983 (Eng. trans. 1999). Whitford states that, in this period, especially from about 1985, Irigaray's writing concentrated on making effective changes in society reflected either in her political thought or her writing.

The third phase of Irigaray's work runs from 1987 to the present; here she concentrates on relating her poetic style of critique to cultural and political intervention. For Irigaray the aim here is to find out in what manner two sexually different subjects can survive together. Significant works in this period are *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*, 1989 (Eng. trans. 1993); *Je, tu, nous: Towards a Culture of Difference*, 1990 (Eng. trans. 1993); *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*, 1990 (Eng. trans. 1993); *Democracy Begins Between Two*, 1994 (Eng. trans. 2000); *To Be Two*, 1997 (Eng. trans. 2001); *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, 1999 (Eng. trans. 2001); *The Way of Love*, 2002; *Sharing the World* (Eng. trans. 2008) and *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*, 2016.

The issues Iranian women poets engage with in their subsequent work can be foreshadowed in earlier poets' work. However, the amount that they stress these issues in their poetry in each period is different, depending on the socio-political features of each period.

During the constitutional period, in the first phase of Iranian women's poetry, poets such as Zhale were critical about the reduction of women to man's 'other'. They prefigured the issue in terms of Irigaray's "free[ing] the two from the one" (Irigaray, 2000: 129-139) by their emphasis on women's education. In the second phase (during the Pahlavi era) poets attempted to cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously to return to 'the reality of two' more openly. Finally, in the third phase of Iranian women's poetry, mostly written in diaspora after 1979, and mostly focusing on the manner in which the female subject relates to her other, the poets shift to a concentration on the elements required to share the culture of two and cultivate hospitality in between the two. This pattern, taken from Irigaray's thought, shifts focus onto the need to replace the duality of subjects in Persian women's poetry with unity in sexual difference.

Finally, this study will demonstrate how 'the house of language' is created by Iranian women poets speaking as women ("*parler-femme*"), resisting cultural economy.

In this way, woman's body is manifest in language and the mastery of the patriarchal system is refused. Irigaray's suggested strategies of "*retour et retouche*", in this poetics, could perform a healing representation. Substituting masculine monological language with dialogical language, women recreate a female imaginary which is flexible, expressive and fluid. The strategies used by the Iranian women poets in their poetry are comparable to those used by Irigaray. The exhortation in their poems to articulate through difference and ethical approach is something on which the poets have continued to be focused throughout their works, since the earliest period.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 explores the pre-revolutionary historical background of Iranian women's movements and their impact on literature in the period of the constitutional revolution. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the literary activities of women and to show how they began to reform and rethink gender, as well as how they opened the doors of dialogue and debate on women's issues in their discourse. Some examples of the poetry of key women figures in this period will be provided to identify the commonly used themes and subjects of the era. The importance of journalism and magazines in the women's movements within the different categories will be demonstrated. It will be shown how they use these platforms to debate women's issues and transgress political boundaries imposed upon public discussion of these issues. The study of women's movements and feminist consciousness leads to an application of Irigaray's theories to an analysis of the poems, in order to assess the poems' language and to reveal the absence of a female subject position, the degrading of the feminine to nature/matter and, finally, the absence of true sexual difference in Iranian culture. It will also help to identify how Iranian woman poets' thematic choices in their poems at different literary moments develop in a similar way to Irigaray's writing pattern: to criticise, to define a second subject, and to define a relationship or dialogue between two subjects. I will be depicting how this phase can be exclusively considered as the stage of awakening, enlightening and the educating of Iranian women in the newly established girls' schools, with the women's magazines enunciating women's self-identity. It will be argued that during this period Iranian women realised the importance of education for liberating them from patriarchal captivity.

Chapter 2 deals with the women's literary movement during the Pahlavi dynasty, which will be studied in the two main eras: Reza Shah's era (1921-1941) and

the second Pahlavi, Mohammad-Reza Shah's era (1941-1979). For each of the eras Iranian women's literary activities will be identified by the representation of a particular ideological issue, such as the social, gender and reform movements. It will be demonstrated how literary meaning and semantic fields in each of the two eras are measured, restructured and developed by the poets' discourse. It will be demonstrated that during the post-nationalism period women faced many difficulties and obstacles, and how the British later conspired to stop the movement in its progress. Ultimately, Reza Khan's coup in 1921 and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty restored authoritarian power and this affected Iran for the next two decades. One of the most significant changes that will be discussed in relation to Reza Shah's era is the struggle to modernise and Westernise gender relations that was neglected in the constitutional period by the authorities. Women's education and unveiling became the primary tasks of the Shah in modernising Iran and women were allowed to register at Tehran University. Although unveiling among women was growing in the public domain, the Shah imposed the unveiling decree in 1936 and women were encouraged to wear Western clothing. It will be argued that writing poetry after the abdication of the Shah in 1941 can be explained as a means of breaking from the censored literature that predominated during the Reza Shah's period. In addition, I will discuss how different forms of socialist concepts and Marxist literary criticism inspired the authors' oppositional works. The poetry of the committed literature and women's attraction to this type of literature and its outcomes in this period will be elaborated.

Chapter 3 will identify the social and political concerns affecting women's rights and literature which developed after the 1979 revolution. The chapter will be split into two distinct sections: first, an exploration of the historical background to the post-revolutionary women's movements, with an insight on women's literary discourse in the Revolution; and second, the women's movement from Reform to Rouhani's presidency, with an insight into women's literary discourse during this period. Each part will illustrate women's activities and their literary production, their rights in the social and political context of Iran, as well as the state's role in responding to and engaging with women's issues. In each era, the themes, forms and types of characters that shaped women's literary production after the Revolution will be explored. In addition, selected poems from different poets will serve as the primary sources for this chapter, indicating the major themes within each era. The rise of the female voice and feminist consciousness will be discussed, as well as its relation to the emergence of young poets

who grew up after the Revolution. This chapter will also explore the impact of censorship and the growth of virtual spaces.

Chapter 4 will discuss how Iranian female poets during the constitutional period began to propose a new image for Iranian women that was contrary to classical literature. More explicitly, I will explore how their poetic voice is assertive in resistance to a male-dominated society. Irigaray's deconstructive method will be used as a means to explore the ways in which women delivered a subversive discourse of gender relations in Iran, and this chapter will discuss the first phase of their objective, which was self-awareness and the education of women. After discussing the connection between Irigaray's work and Iranian women's poetry, the representation of women and their gender identity in Persian traditional literature will be elaborated upon. This will help in understanding why the search for recognition and self-awareness in women's poetry in the constitutional period depended mainly upon the poets' consideration of the concept of *Sharm* (self-erasure). An analysis of dominant notions of sexuality will be performed via a selection of women's poetry from both the militant and post-revolutionary stage of the constitutional period. In this respect, the poems of Alam-Taj Ghaem Maghami (1883-1947), who used the pen name Zhale, and Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) will be analysed. The choice of their poems relates, in the first instance, to thematic concerns around gender issues.

In Chapter 5 the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad will be analysed. The work of this poet, similar to the poetry of the previous period, will identify changes in the female voice, gender identity, and the gender politics of the time. Her voice will also be compared to one of the previous period's poets in order to assess the intensity of her conformity and resistance. I will analyse whether she successfully exposed women's struggle to be included in society, and to what extent she was conforming to codes of *Sharm* (self-erasure). I will discuss whether the strategies used by Forough in her poetry, compared to the previous female poets and also to contemporary female poets, could arguably be more comparable to those used by Irigaray. Through an analysis of her poetry, I will show how her poems highlight difference and ethical approaches. Once again, this study utilises Irigaray's critical insights to claim the need to establish a fresh and different 'linguistic home' for women. More importantly, in this chapter I will discuss how Forough's poetry can be observed and reflected through the second phase of Irigaray's work. In other words, how Forough, similar to Irigaray, attempts to

cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously shift to ‘the reality of two’ more openly.

Chapter 6 will show how an analysis of the poems reveals the new imagery, themes, genres and structures that the women’s movement developed after the 1979 revolution. More specifically, how the poems express sexual desire, notions of visibility and invisibility (veiling), and how they modify male mythologies from a female point of view. It will also show how the selected poets revised the traditional pre-revolutionary literary themes. In other words, how the poetry of Tahereh Saffarzadeh, Simin Behbahani and Granaz Moussavi enacted a shift in their discourse, from traditional Islamic themes of mothers, wives, guards of the revolution, warriors, and martyrs, to more gender related themes, during the past three decades after the Revolution. In this search for the cultural meanings of Iranian contemporary women’s poetry, Irigaray’s transcendental theories of the duality of subjectivity, the masculine and feminine, and the culture of dialogic exchange between different subjects, will once again be useful in analysing the selected poetry. It will then be explored how these poets transform the poetic line to represent certain female experiences in their culture. Similar to other chapters, this will be explored through the lens of Irigarayan modes of resistance. Irigaray’s resistant praxis will be introduced to oppose the masculine authority over language and reverse the negative image of women. The aim of this chapter is to find out whether Iranian women’s poetry during this period can be studied in terms of Irigaray’s three phases and more explicitly in relation to the third phase of Irigaray’s work. These phases or continual shifts will show how the poets stress in their poems the importance of the need to replace the duality of subjects by the one in sexual difference. Finally, my analysis of post-revolutionary women’s poetry will explore whether the female poets from this period, similar to the previous periods’ poets, struggle to cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously shift back to ‘the reality of two’, and to what extent their struggle is defined in comparison to the past period. Moreover, I will explore whether they also try to focus on the manner in which the female subject relates to her other (Irigaray’s third phase). This chapter will attempt to reflect on the third phase of Irigaray’s work, via the selected poets’ work. The chapter concludes that they explore in what manner two differently gendered subjects can survive together.

Through the assessment of these poems, a discussion begins which starts with the reality of female repression and finishes with a prospect for women’s freedom, a

freedom that comes from writing poems. When reality is repressive, poetry or fiction can provide a position of resistance.

Chapter One: The Constitutional Revolution, the Women's Movement and Literature (1906-1922)

Introduction

It is possible to correlate the Iranian women's literary movement with the discourse of modernity and its relation to the political and cultural changes in Iran.

Like Talattof we can focus on the immediate shifts in literary representation which frequently accompany socio-political changes, i.e. issues of social justice and democracy, in Iran (Talattof, 2000: 1). This and the following chapters propose a fresh evaluation of contemporary Iranian women's poetry, valuing and accepting the key role of the dominant ideology in its sociocultural context. These chapters will explore the shifts in these ideologies within a feminist theoretical context by examining women's poetry from different literary movements. This research will not deny or question the authority of these movements. However, like Talattof's model it will question the relation of these movements to different eras. Furthermore, this study will concentrate on only one genre, poetry, and will not consider examples from other literary genres such as novels. It will also focus only on female poets who produced their poems from the constitutional period to the period after the 1979 revolution.

The structure of the following three chapters, following Talattof's approach, does not agree with the concept of literary history as "an integrated continuum", and offers a style of "episodic movements" that is formed by changing "ideologies of representation" (Talattof, 2000: 1).

For example, it will be discussed how the literary work of women preceding the 1979 revolution is written with different terms and themes when compared to the post-revolution work. It will be shown how women's post-revolutionary literary work, usually demonstrates a notable consideration of women's issues and gender relations. Particular themes in women's literary work of the post-revolutionary period are the issues of gender hierarchy and women's experiences within it, articulated in figurative language. Their narratives transcend existing patriarchal literary discourse. As Talattof states, women's writing can enunciate their dissent against sexual oppression and has the potential to indicate their struggle for their lost identity (Talattof, 1997: 531).

This and the following chapter will demonstrate how pre-revolutionary literary work focuses more on socio-political issues, rather than gender issues. It will also be shown that if there were works concentrating on women's issues, they were articulated

according to the guidelines of the 1950's committed¹⁰ literature that was predominantly patriarchal. In other words, these women's works were marginalised by male-dominated works of literature, and silenced. Hence, we can define two phases of literary discourse within the women's literary work, before and after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The Revolution itself is responsible for this major movement in women's writing. The emergence of literature concerning the Cultural Revolution (*Engelab-e Farhangi*) in 1985 restrained the literary work of the pre-revolutionary committed writers and created a new episode in literature, with the application of distinct religious themes. However, during the 1990s, with the start of Khatami's presidency, a new phase of writing developed. The new government reduced its restrictions on writers' works and provided a moderately uncensored context for writers to enjoy certain freedoms and diversity in discourse. The change was most noticeable in women's writing, and resulted in a growth in the feminist literary movement.

Women have been faced, in each period, with many strict social codes that have silenced them. Each of the forthcoming chapters will therefore be prefaced with a general consideration of the main events of the era in question. The purpose of these three chapters is to prepare the ground for discussions of subversive discourse and the prevalent themes in each period. These themes will be identified in later chapters through the undercurrents of women's poetry. Women's literary creativity in Iran has always been inspired and conditioned by socio-political issues. Therefore, these chapters will explore the social and political concerns regarding women's rights that developed before and after the 1979 revolution.

These chapters will also address the context and episodic movement of women's poetry, and they will depict how different power structures stimulate the representation of specific gender issues in women's poetry in Iran. More specifically, these periods will illustrate women's experience of gender and sexuality in Iranian society from the constitutional Revolution to the present day, and how women's activities reached their climax after the 1979 revolution.

Different periods of political change in Iran produced different themes in literature. Before the 1979 revolution, for example, the themes of Simin Behbahani's poetry were mostly about poverty, orphans and corruption, indicating her distressed feelings for the displaced, the marginalised and the neglected. However, her post-

¹⁰ Committed literature writers show the problems of their society in their work and they try to offer solutions for these issues.

revolutionary work deals with the themes of freedom of expression, and the rights of minorities and prisoners. Her choice of words and metaphors in her poetry explores the strength of social, cultural, political and moral repression. This chapter will prepare the ground for emerging discussion of the themes, forms, types of characters and discursive contexts that shape women's literature before and after the Revolution. These themes will be explicitly discussed in the later chapters through selected poems by the poets from each period.

I will consider the production of Iranian women's poetry during three distinct phases: the constitutional period (1906-1922), the Pahlavi era (1925-1979) and the period following the 1979 revolution, which itself consists of the Khomeini era (1979-1989), the Reconstruction era (1989-1997), the Reformist era (1997-2005), the presidency of Mahmud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) and the presidency of Hassan Rouhani (2013-present).

My aim is to focus on the literary activities of women in these three phases, and I seek to show how they started to reform and rethink gender, as well as how they opened the doors of dialogism. Some examples of the poetry of key women figures in each phase will be provided to identify the commonly used themes and subjects of each era.

This chapter will also depict the importance of journalism and magazines in the women's movements within the different categories. It will be shown how they all use these platforms to debate women's issues and transgress the political boundaries imposed upon public discussion of these issues.

This chapter will only cover the constitutional period. The rest of the phases, Reza Shah Pahlavi's era, Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi's era and the post-revolutionary era, will be analysed in subsequent chapters.

The Theme of Modernisation

The first important theme of constitutional literature is a modern or liberal school of thought, which emerged in relation to the rise of the constitutional movement. Women's literary production in this era was naturally influenced by the events of the time. The literature of the constitutional period, like the constitutional movement itself, was inspired by the social, economic, and cultural changes that took place during the nineteenth century (Kamshad, 2011: 9-12). Also, as Abbas Milani contends, it is crucial to study the work of both male and female intellectuals and their literary movements, in

order to understand the relation of genuine modernity to cultural values (Milani, 2004: 94).

During the nineteenth century Iran encountered Western power and ideology, which gave rise to modernisation in the economy and education. Some intellectuals insisted on the ideology of modernisation, and these reformers believed in the necessity of the separation of religion from the state, in order to accelerate the process of modernisation (Kian & Thiébaud, 1998: 27-30, 36-47). The ideology of the constitutional revolution upheld the fundamental principles of modernity, and this was particularly evident in its resolute support for the notion of progress. Curiosity about the concept of a modern Westernised state, based on the will of the people instead of a monocratically organised structure, as well as curiosity about emerging concepts of parliament and state-run government, also reinforced the ideology of modernity during the constitutional period. While the constitutional revolution did not fully achieve its goals in creating a truly democratic state, its promotion of the “ideology of progress” formed a milestone in Iran’s political history.

However, the fierce conflict amongst Western-influenced intellectuals and the monarchy did not allow for the establishment of a totally modern constitution. In other words, the idea of ‘Westernisation’ and “the Qajar’s concessions to European powers” (Matin, 2013: 76) became a matter of conflict among these groups. These intellectuals criticised the monarchy for not having democratic power.

Subsequently, this bottom-up process of modernisation came to be controlled by Reza Shah Pahlavi’s compulsory arrangements, which were influenced by Atatürk’s developments in Turkey. In the Iranian case, the modernisation project was mostly limited “to imitat[ing] the Western model in creating a new state and economic structure” (Bashiriyeh, 2012: 58) and was not extended to other areas of social life, such as “ideas of freedom, democracy, secularism, gender equality, critical thinking, expansion of civil society, and other elements of modernity” (Darvishpour, 2006: 177-200).

Moreover, some traditional religious authorities in Iran also had a negative view of Westernisation and modernisation, seeing it as a threat to their way of life. Despite this conflict, reformers continued to confront the conventional sexual and gender relations of the Qajar era. They used modern institutions such as newspapers and parliament to facilitate their opposition (Afari, 2009: 111-112, 118). However, the economic and cultural dependency of the Shah on the West later resulted in a reaction

by the *Ulama* (religious authorities) and *Bazaaris*' (merchants) (Aminéh & Eisenstadt, 2007: 132).

A reaction against modernisation as Westernisation was initiated, which later became a central theme in the process leading to the Islamic revolution. Jahanbegloo argues that the anti-modernisation movement caused "concerns about lost identity [which] pushed some intellectuals toward a return to tradition and religion and even to nostalgia for the simple village life" (Jahanbegloo, 2004: 6).

However, the concern around a "lost identity" is more demonstrable among the Iranian women's movement, from the start of the secularisation project in Iran. In her book *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (2009) Afary argues that the patterns of modernisation and secularisation in Iran are mostly constructed around changes in sexual and gender relations (2009: 261). Afary insists that the main reason for this was the influence of the Sharia laws which had a direct control over these relations (ibid).

The Constitutional Revolution

Women's movements aimed at altering their social situation began to develop in the midst of the constitutional Revolution. The ground was prepared for the constitutional uprising during the Qajar period and some of the major events behind its occurrence include Iran's defeat in the two wars with Russia, the subsequent concessions in Transcaucasia and increasing British interference (Afary, 2009: 261). These all resulted in a growing need for modern skills and knowledge. Ebrahimnejad argues that the "defeat by Russia shook Iranian society, and stimulated movements against the existing system in the guise of religious reforms" (Ebrahimnejad, 2013: 88). Moreover, to a lesser degree, the Naser al-Din Shah's frequent visits to Europe and his encounters with Western ideologies such as constitutionalism, nationalism and secularism, as well as other trips by Iranians to foreign countries and their adaptation of these Western concepts to the political and social structure of Iran, can also be counted as the first awakening steps of the uprising. Afary also stresses that "the increased contact with the more democratic and industrialised institutions of the West also encouraged Iranian intellectuals to call for a reform of their traditional society, to demand greater political representation, and to ask for limits on the authority of the absolutist government" (Afary, 1997: 3).

The Naser al-Din Shah's ambitious reforms in the economy, government and the military all faced failure, due to insufficient financial resources. The Shah became more

dependent on foreign forces to pay for his modest reforms. Abrahamian stresses that, to overcome his financial problems, “the Shah increasingly resorted to the sale of offices, titles, state lands, tax-farms, and, most important of all, economic privileges to foreign governments and concession-hunters” (Abrahamian, 2000: 393). For example, “Baron de Reuter, a British citizen, bought the rights to build railroads and search for minerals. Lynch Brothers, a British company, gained control over shipping in the Karun River. The Imperial Bank of Persia, also a British concern, purchased the monopoly to print banknotes and the privilege to collect tolls on southern roads” (ibid). Moreover, Russia also took some privileges, taking control of the railways and roads in the north, and fishing industry in the Caspian and Enzeli ports (ibid).

However, familiarity with capitalism, Western ideology and the continuing growth of central government led to the rise of the first secular and educated modern intellectuals. They stressed the limitation of the power of the monarchy and its replacement by publicly elected representatives. They opposed the Shah’s abrupt decisions in the financial crisis, and selling of offices and lands, as well as the dependency on the West (ibid). From a Marxist point of view, this frustrated “national bourgeoisie” was inspired by the ‘*ulama*’ (religious authorities) to oppose the ruling power. The religious authorities had an influential role in the bazaar and had attracted the public for a long time. The intellectuals had a smaller audience because of mass illiteracy, and acted mainly as advisors (ibid: 412-413).

All in all, according to Abrahamian, Iranian society was challenged by two central shifts that caused the uprising for the Constitution revolution. First, due to the treaties between Iran and Russia, which allowed Russians to have absolute control over the northern regions of Iran, cultural contact increased between the northern parts of Iran and the Caucasus. This contact resulted in the introduction of radical ideas of social communism into Iranian society, and these ideas manifested themselves in the form of secret societies and organisations such as the Secret Center (*Markaz-i Amiyun*) in Tabriz. Second, after the Tobacco Protest against an 1890 tobacco concession granted by the Shah to Great Britain, the social structure of Iran was preparing to identify with a national community instead of tribalism. This is considered to be the first open conflict in Iran between the people and authority. The colonising intentions of the foreign powers generated a common cause among the radical factions, resulting in the rise of a multi-class, anti-absolutist movement, and the formation of a nationalistic movement during the World War I (Abrahamian, 2000: 413).

Growing social, economic pressure from foreign forces in the Iranian government and society resulted in the gradual breakdown of political autonomy (feudal social patterns) and more economic dependency on foreign capitalists. Finally, the merchant classes and the newly formed intellectuals joined forces with the religious authorities in 1906 to restrain the authority of the monarchy, forming a Constitutional state (Matin, 2013: 45). The penetration of Western concepts of constitutionalism and social democracy had set the foundation for the growth of radical and social democratic ideologies and organisations among the coalition of reformers.

Diversity of ideas in the movement brought division and conflict over implementing the reforms. Therefore the revolutionaries soon began to split along ideological lines, and this led to the appearance of radical factions. The monarchy seized the moment and claimed power. Although the constitutional movement continued to flourish, factional problems, along with foreign intervention, slowed down the pace of the movement and left Iran in chaos once again.

The Women's Movement in the Constitution Period

Women's organised political presence in Iran goes back to their opposition to the cancellation of the Reuters Concession¹¹ (Thaler, 2010: 7) in 1872 and their support of the tobacco protest against the British in 1890. Due to the fatwa against smoking tobacco issued by Ayatollah Hasan al-Shirazi, mosques became centres of resistance and political association. Women joined forces and participated in underground movements to fight against the foreign policies and boycott their tobacco imports (Afary, 1996: 69). Women also participated in the demolition of a Russian bank and began to raise funds for the establishment of the National Bank of Iran (ibid). Working women financed the case from their monthly incomes; women donated their jewellery or their own inheritances (ibid). Sedghi mentions some further examples of women's activities in this period:

Zinat Pasha, a woman from the city of Tabriz, who is described as 'passionate, brave and enlightened,' led a group of armed and veiled women in the bazaar against the concession. Their protest [against Tobacco] closed down the bazaar. (Sedghi, 2007: 41)

¹¹ The Reuters Concession gave Baron Julius de Reuter, a British-Jewish banker and businessman, control over Persian roads, telegraphs, mills, factories, the extraction of resources, and other public works in exchange for a set sum for 5 years, and 60% of all the net revenue for 20 years.

In the spring of 1891 massive protests began with the collective efforts of liberal intellectuals, religious scholars, merchants and Islamic modernists, to protest against the foreign policies of the Qajar dynasty and to limit its power. This collective protest of forces reached its climax in the Constitutional revolution of 1905-1911. Women were one of the major groups of participants, mobilising and participating in street uprisings (Afary, *ibid*).

Women's mobilisation not only was inspired by religious authorities' call for the protests but also during the riots some educated women used the momentum to raise their voices and discuss their own independent issues, such as "the recognition of their *anjomans* (societies), the launching of girls' schools and suffrage rights" (Sedghi, 2007: 43). In other words, these women played an influential role in changing the surface of the revolution from a political uprising into a social uprising. These women shared their individual experiences, issues and feelings in their secret societies and associations, which were supported by the constitutionalists of the period. The most recognised of such associations were *Anjomane Azaadiye Zanaan* (the Women's Freedom Society) and *Anjomane Zanaane Neqaabpush* (the Society of Masked Women) (Sedghi, *ibid*).

On November 29, 1911, Czarist Russia, with the approval of the British government, expelled Morgan Shuster, the financial advisor to the Iranian government. When the parliament refused to do so, Russia occupied northern parts of Iran and sent an ultimatum to occupy Tehran within forty-eight hours. Parliament was on edge and debated the ultimatum. Many people demonstrated and marched into the streets of the cities, and women also joined their forces to resist (Shuster, 2008: 192).

During the constitutional period women activists began to argue for women's suffrage. The appeal initially appeared in the *Habl al-Matin*, *Mosaavaat*, *Sur-e Esraafil* and *Iran-e Nu* (New Iran) newspapers. As a result, in 1911, Vakil ul-Ruaayaa, Hamedan's representative in parliament, announced a debate on the subject. However, the debate failed to proceed due to opposition from religious figures, who considered the debate "contrary to the etiquette of [the] Islamic Parliament." The parliament decided that "women must nonetheless be excluded from electoral politics" (Sedghi, 2007: 49). The recognition of women's right to vote postponed until 1963 as part of Mohammad Reza Shah's White Revolution reforms.

The expansion of the women's movement was encouraged by other central factors and events of the period, such as the success stories of women's suffrage in Europe and America in the late 1910s; direct contact between Europeans and Iranian

people and their presence in Iran; the dispatch of students to the West and the influence of Western education on Iranian intellectuals; expansion in the activities of minority groups such as Baha'is, which included organising *Anjomans* (assemblies) and opening Missionaries schools for girls; the Egyptian and Turkish women's movements; and finally the birth of the Communist Party as a result of the Russian Revolution in 1917 (Mahdi, 2004: 429).

Many women joined the Communist Party, and women's organisations began to develop within the party. The Communist Party also supported women's organisations and placed stress on women's enrolment in their activities. They also helped these new organisations to increase their membership numbers. Paidar reports that "Soltanzadeh, a prominent Communist leader, wrote the first Communist statement on the position of women in Iran [...] Communist women established correspondence with Soviet women's newspapers and journals such as *Eastern Woman (Zan Shargh)*" (Paidar, 1995: 97). As a result of the activities of Iranian communists, *Jamiat-e Peyk-e Saadat-e Nesvan* (messenger of women's prosperity) was formed in 1923 in the northern city of Rasht. Hammed Shahidian states that "Several progressive women of the Province of Gilan joined the organisation which established night classes, schools, and libraries for women published a journal called *Peyk-e Sa'adat*, and for the first time celebrated International Women's Day" (Shahidian, 2002: 127). The Communist Party persuaded women to join the Patriotic Women's League and to be active participants. However, the Communist Party did not meet some of the women's expectations and they found it less radical in promoting their voice than they had hoped (ibid). As a result, Women's Awakening (*Bidari Zanan*) was formed in 1923. This organisation placed emphasis on women's education and designed literary classes specifically aimed at women. They also continued to celebrate International Women's Day. Women's political activities in the constitutional period prepared the ground for their right of equal education and the establishment of schools for women. Education for women provided an opportunity to improve their own literary products and voice their issues.

Female poets emerged in a time when women were confronted with social and academic restrictions, and were kept in solitude. During the constitutional period their poems were tools for challenging oppression. The poets struggled to inform other women of their rights. They expressed concern about issues that were spiritual, intellectual and fundamental, and emphasised the necessity for women to receive an education. They stressed the fact that the inferiority of women in Iran is rooted in the

absence of knowledge. The women's movement developed in three stages of awakening (Sedghi, 2007: 51), as will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Arrival of the Printing Press

Along with the arrival of intellectuals, the independent printing press emerged, which facilitated the generation and implementation of Western ideologies in Iran. Regular printing in Iran began with the Fath-Nameh and Jahadieh Thesis in Tabriz in the early nineteenth century (Saadat Noury, 2005). At first printing was solely used for religious purposes, such as editions of the Qur'an or religious studies. However, the impact of modernity led to a clash between the traditional usage of printing and the new ideologies (Ajoodani, 2003: 202). Printing began to alter the traditional structure of the social and political order. Print circulated knowledge and provided literacy to Iranians (Lorentz, 1971: 87). The circulation of knowledge was no longer limited only to religious writings, and secular ideas overpowered the traditional establishment (ibid: 91).

With the arrival of regular printing, the press grew to be the voice of more central issues, rather than merely local complaints. Issues of freedom of speech, political expression and justice became more popular subjects of the newspapers (Kia, 1998: 203). Soon, the press was populated with revolutionary terms such as constitution, freedom of speech, individual rights equality and women's issues (Ajoodani, 2003: 456). Also, for the first time, the press employed subjects such as literature, ethics, caricature, parody and science in its output (Browne, 2009: 501). The circulation of knowledge by the press smoothed the awakening process of Iranian society (Kia: ibid), and paved the way for the nationalist movement and later the quest for the establishment of a parliament (Ajoodani, 2003: 263). Many independently run papers started to arise, such as *Danesh* (knowledge), *Eqbal* (luck), *Vatan* (homeland), etc. But the power of the press was not absolute and the monarchy and the religious authorities maintained intense control over what was printed (Kia, 1994: 205), in the women's press in particular (Khiabany, 2009: 185).

Women also published independently run papers to challenge the norms of their society, with newly-born, modern ideologies, in the constitutional period (Browne, 2009: 503). Gholam Khiabany argues that the constitutional revolution and a new awareness of "law, rights and equality" encouraged the presence of women in society and "especially print culture" (Khiabany, 2009: 184). Women's printed writings

appeared due to fresh opportunities that became available in the constitutional period, as well as the opening of new schools, organisations and communal spaces that raised consciousness among women (ibid). According to Price, “by 1913 there were 9 women’s societies and 63 girls’ schools in Tehran with close to 2500 students” (Price, 2000; Keyhany, 1993: 77).

Women’s Rights Demands and Publications

After the movement to establish a constitutional revolution succeeded, the monarch was convinced to sign a proclamation to set up a parliament (the *Majlis*) on October 7, 1906. A few months later, parliament forced the monarch to pass its authorisation for the drafting of Fundamental Laws. Active women had an appeal published in the parliament’s newsletter asking for the right of education for women. However, the parliament refused their suggestion and announced that women should not interfere in political affairs, and instead should concentrate on “child rearing and housework” (Ringer, 2001: 240). They openly announced that “women’s education and training should be restricted to raising children, home economics and preserving the honour of the family” (Price, 2000). According to Price, as a result, “family laws remained within the domain of Sharia with no change and emancipation of women became an embarrassment” (ibid). Sedghi calls the phase after this formal demand by women for their right of education “the second stage of awakening” for women. This phase focused on establishing schools for girls to confront the patriarchal system of education (Sedghi, 2007: 53).

Women’s political activities at the beginning mostly concentrated on gaining their right to schooling and education. Although the first girls’ school was established by American Presbyterian missionaries in 1838 (similar schools later appeared in other cities), the students were mainly from religious minorities and not Muslim girls (Elwell-Sutton, 2013: 119-154). Muslim girls were not allowed to attend these schools because it was against the moral standards of their culture and the teachings of Islam, according to the religious authorities of the period (Price, 2000). Despite all these difficulties, the first group of Muslim girls and boys attended the American school in Tehran in the 1870s at the request of Mohammad Shah (Keddie, 2002: 185). However, in 1903 the school was closed by the order of Mozaffar al-din Shah. Parents had to take their daughters out of the school as the Shah believed schools for the girls were places “where they were being taught to wear high shoes with long dresses” (ibid: 186).

It should be noted that the place and power of religion (Shi'a Islam) in the parliament was a very influential factor and many of the women's reforming demands were interpreted as being against the Sharia laws. The reason for the decisive influence of Sharia laws in parliament, according to Kamran Martin, is that "the Shi'a *ulama* [religious authorities] had acquired significant power and wealth during the late Safavid period and long post-Safavi interregnum. In the absence of an operational central state, they increasingly became local arbiters in various judicial, social and commercial matters. This increased and solidified their social prestige and influence" (Martin, 2013: 58).

Following these events and the decisive impact of Sharia laws, women realised that their demands for the right to education and the authorisation of their associations would not be recognised by the ruling powers, by many social groups or by religious authorities. Gradually women started to become independent and form their own semi-private associations. Despite all the hindrance and difficulties, women formed various associations, such as private schools for girls and women's hospitals. In 1907 a women's assembly was held in Tehran, where they outlined ten resolutions to resist the decisions of parliament and the Shah. Their main aim was to establish girls' schools and they proposed to spend their dowry money on educating the girls. As mentioned above, the *Doushizegan* school (The School for Girls), the very first girls' school in Iran, was opened by Bibi Vazirof. The school was faced with many threats and Bibi had to close the school but was later able to reopen it. Another school for women, *Namous* (honor), was established by Tobin Azmoudeh in the same year (1907), in her own home. By 1910, more than 50 girls' schools were active in the capital (Vakili, 2011: 30). Many more schools continued to open, when women were encouraged by Mohammad Hossein Yazdi's¹² wife, Mrs Safieh Yazdi, who opened the *Iffatiyeh* school in 1910 (Kashani-Sabet, 2011: 123). Mahrokh Goharshenas also confronted her husband and opened *Taraghi* in 1911. In the same year Mah Sultan Amir Sehei founded *Tarbiyat*. Education for women was considered a key to their progress in eliminating the control of the patriarchal system on women's affairs (Sedghi, 2007: 52).

Finally, with the emergence of printing, the third stage of women's awakening began (ibid: 54). Women became the editors and publishers of independently run journals. During this period, nearly eight women's publications were printed. The first

¹² Pro-constitution religious authority figure.

publications by women were weekly and monthly magazines such as *Danesh* (Knowledge) in 1910 and *Shokoufeh* (Blossom) in 1913, *Zaban-e Zanan* (Women's Language) in 1919, *Nomeh Banouvan* (women's letter) in 1920 and *Nasavat-e Alam* (Women of the World) in 1921. The content of their publications¹³ was mainly focused on the living conditions of women. In later years (mid-1930s) they added other issues to their publications, such as women's rights, schooling and women's veiling (Price, 2000). Other publications soon followed, such as "Women's Letters, Daughters of Iran magazine, Women's World, and The Women's Universe" (Hashemi-Rafsanjani, 1995: 5).

Many of the women's publications were organised with the help of male publishers and female editors, "usually the wives, daughters, or sisters of well-established and respected political figures of the time. In some respects these publications were more like a family business" (Khiabany, 2009: 185). Women along with men became active political analysts of the events of the period with the aid of the press.

Women's issues, which were considered matters of privacy before the movement, with the aid of the press became a public concern. Many men and women who were inspired by education in the West began to challenge the current conditions of women and were encouraged by the movement to change the conditions of women which, in their view, were very repressive. Ali Mirsepassi, in explaining the history of the constitutionalist movement in Iran, refers to Morteza Ravandi, author of *Social History of Iran*, who argues that "[F]rom the time of Naser al-din Shah, some Iranian thinkers, who were already familiar with European civilisation and culture, were active in Iran and abroad in awakening the Iranian people to the struggle against oppression and dictatorship" (Mirsepassi, 2000: 57). Mirsepassi implies that the movement to change these conditions was originated by educated Iranians in the West, and he refers to Ravandi's analysis as "the awakening (*Bidari*) of the Iranian people" (ibid). The thought and work of activists such as Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (1854 - 1896/97), Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh (1812 -1878), Mirza Malkum Khan (1833-1908) and Shaykh Ahmad Ruhi (1893-1935) in the first and second stage of women's awakening were very effective in informing the public, particularly in the fields of marriage, polygamy, women's right to education, and issues concerning women's isolation and veiling in

¹³ For an overview of women's magazines and journals detailing their subjects in the constitutional period, refer to Fathi, A. (1985) *Women and the Family in Iran*, Brill.

public spaces. These ideas were widely spread through their writings. With the arrival of regular printing, the third stage of women's awakening, women started to cover all these issues in their own publications and from their own perspectives.

The Women's Literary Movement

The growth of female writers started in the early days of the Constitutional revolution in 1905, and they began not only to publish their works in the newly born journals for women, but they also published their work in other journals and newspapers of the time (ibid: 54). Fakhr-e Ozmā Arghun, for example, a noted feminist and the mother of Simin Behbahani, sent one of her patriotic poems to the *Eghdam* (action) newspaper, which came out in 1923-1924. Because both printing and female poets¹⁴ are relatively new phenomena in Iran, there are currently no studies describing and analysing Iranian women's poetry during the constitutional period. Most of the critical studies were completed in the last three decades after the Revolution in 1979.

During the constitutional period women's issues were initially documented in the attempts at social reform and the writings by Taj al-Saltane, the daughter of Naser al-Din Shah, who knew French and was familiar with European thought. She condemned the discrimination against women and criticised her father's discipline (Javadi, 1988: 215). Similarly, Bibi Khanum Fatema Astarabadi (1858/9-1921), a notable Iranian writer and satirist, criticised the religious and cultural practices in her pamphlet *Moayeb-ul Rejal* (the statesmen's follies). Haideh Moghissi states that Bibi Khanum blamed men for the condition of women in Iran and notes that "all the problems and chaos faced by Iran and by its women were men's doings" (Moghissi, 1999: 128). The first Iranian independent school for girls, *Dabestan-e Doushizegan* (The School for Girls) was also founded by Bibi Khanum. She wrote several articles in defence of the right of girls to receive universal education¹⁵.

¹⁴ There are some exception female poets living before the 19th century such as Mahasti Ganjavi a 12th-century Persian poet or Rabi'a Balkhi who was possibly the first woman poet in the history of New Persian poetry. References to her can be found in the poetry of Rudaki and Attar. Some evidences indicate that she lived during the same period as Rudaki, the court poet to the Samanid Emir Naṣr II (914-943). However, there is no evidence of the poets' complete written work and only few poems from each are remained (Indo-Iranica, Vol. 2, Iran Society India, Calcutta, 1947, p. 39).

¹⁵ Bibi Khanum's articles were published in newspapers such as *Tamaddon* (Civilisation), *Habl al-Matin* (Firm Rope) and *Majles* (Parliament).

Women's Constitutional Poetry

The Constitutional revolution and the accompanying social upheaval provided an opportunity for women's literature to flourish. The poems expressed women's experiences, social issues and their pain. Although women attained a few achievements of their own in their early writings, their activities in this period mostly relied on the attempts of leading male intellectuals. Some of the influential literary male figures who had prominent roles in putting forward women's demands in the form of poetry, fiction and political views were: Mirzadeh Eshqi (1893-1924), Iraj Mirza (1874-1926), Malak ol-Shuara Bahar (1884-1951), Yahya Daulatabadi (1862-1939), Abolqasem Lahooti (1887-1957), Ali Akbar Dehkhuda (1879-1956), Ahmad Kasravi (1890-1946), Seyed Hassan Taghizadeh (1878-1970) and Saeed Nafissi (1895-1966).

Constitutional literature covers the literary work from the late nineteenth century to 1922; it was produced because of the desire to reform the social and political issues of the country. According to Soroudi, an outline of literature in the constitutional period produced in three parts (Soroudi, 1992: 212-216):

1. The pre-constitutional period (before 1906)
2. The revolutionary (militant) period (1906-1911)
3. The post-constitutional period (1911-1922)

Constitutional poetry and its prose are two different subjects and they must be examined separately for this period. This research will focus only on the poetry movement of the constitutional period.

In the pre-Constitutional period women poet activists (very few in number) placed stress on following the classical pattern of poetry to aid their social movements. This was known as a return to the traditions of the classical masters.¹⁶ There is no break from traditional boundaries in Persian forms of love and life in their poems and typical arrangements of male sexual desire is evident in their work. Their work follows the classical pattern of normative male sexual of arousal, tension, climax and resolution in expressing their pleasure. Persian traditional narrative pattern of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion is evident in many of love poems of the literary classics such as Hafez or Saadi whose work is often referred to as an ideal portrayal of Persian love. Although there were some exceptions in the Qajar period, such as Tahereh Qorrat al-E'in, who resisted and challenged classical forms, for those

¹⁶ For more information refer to *Bargasht-e Adabi* in Yahya Aryanpour's three volume study, *Az Saba ta Nima [From Saba to Nima]*.

following the classical themes, style and form were an absolute necessity. With the development of reforms in contemporary society, the social and political consciousness of writers began to evolve towards the end of the nineteenth century. These writers began to criticise the ruling authorities (AryanPour, 1993: 141-144). Soon they became disappointed with the classic repetitive themes and styles of poems that used lines of poetry as a space to admire and bless the policies of the authorities or their beloved (ibid: 36). Instead, poets began to reform the route of poetry and began concentrating their themes and content on the homeland (*Vatan*) rather than the imaginary beloved (Soroudi, 1979: 7). In other words, the emotional impact for the poet (both male and female) was stimulated by nationalistic feelings in this era, and not so much by feelings for individuals.

In the revolutionary (militant) period, after the institution of the parliament in August 1906, women stood up for their rights and expressed their issues in the parliament for the first time. They sent their demands either directly to the parliament or stressed their issues in the form of writing poems and prose to the existing magazines. Therefore, the women's movement and their literature produced in this period are intertwined and should not be studied separately. Newspaper publications increased massively in this era (Browne, 2009: ix-xi). These women poets also received support from male poets, who also addressed their issues in their poems. Examples of some active male poets who inserted women's voices and demands into their poetry are Mohammad-Taqi Bahar (1884-1951), widely known as Malek o-Sho'ara, Mirzadeh Eshghi or Sayed Mohammad Reza Kordestani (1893-1924), and Sayed Ashraf-Al-Din Gilani, known as Nasim-e-Shomal.

Poetry in this period was employed as the main medium when compared to the publication of prose. Soroudi believes that the reason for this massive attention to the publication of poetry in this era is that: "Both educated and illiterate people were accustomed to the recitation of verse, which could, in a few words, summon emotions and channel them in desired directions" (Soroudi, 1992: 214). The lyrical *ghazal* (sonnet) became more popular than before for its "suitability in musical performance" (ibid: 215).

Reform in the literature of this period did not mean a complete break from traditional models. As Browne explains, reformed poetry kept a didactic tone (Browne, 2009: 167). However, subject, diction, language and form were defined both by the poet's choice and by pressure from other measurable factors. As Soroudi argues, the

most important reform in constitutional poetry occurred in its “thematic” sense. The poets were free to choose their poetic diction, and concepts of poetic and non-poetic vocabulary no longer had a place in their poetry (Soroudi, 1992: 215). Soroudi briefly reviews the thematic content of this era’s poetry:

Criticism of the Persian ruling class and the prevailing social, economic, and political order; praise of democracy and defense of civil and human rights; solidarity with the masses and socialist ideas; anticlerical and antireligious sentiments; attitudes both favorable and hostile to Islam; xenophobic feelings, especially against Arabs and Turks, who were blamed for the backwardness of Persia; glorification of pre-Islamic Persia; anti-imperialism focused on Russia and Great Britain; admiration of Germany; the need for modernisation, with emphasis on modern education; and the status of women, especially as related to education and the wearing of the veil. (Soroudi, 1992: 215)

Although the lyrical *gazel* became a popular form, hortatory *masnavi* (rhyming couplets) also had an influential role in this era because of their simplicity in language and flexibility in a poetic structure. The practice of using idioms, and satirical and colloquial language, as well as alluding to traditional tales, also became common in this form of poetry (Soroudi: *ibid*). Several new types of poetic diction and new phrases were introduced into the language from foreign languages, mainly French (Ishaque, 1943: 46-61). Writers used these new words either in their own works or in translations of foreign works. Literary magazines attempted to use simple Persian language that freed itself from the influence of the Arabic language. The aim was to use a language that could be understood by both literate and illiterate people. Talattof states that:

These journals invented words such as *bakhshnameh* (bylaws), *parleman* (parliament), *sabteh ahval* (office of identity registration), *burs* (stock), and *roshanfikir* (intellectual), which they thought were necessary for the presentation of modern ideas and Western concepts. (Talattof, 2000: 20)

Talattof continues that “at times they failed to create the terminology they needed and therefore used Western words directly in their writings” (*ibid*).

However, in the post-constitutional period (1911-1922) the reform of poetry was faced with a serious challenge. In 1911 the parliament’s term expired and it failed to hold its ground before foreign pressures. This caused significant disorder in the reform movement. Following the deterioration in the constitutional forces, poets began to place stress on poetic form rather than content. In other words, activist poets suppressed their critical and militant voices and instead stressed the aesthetic structure of their poetry.

They brought new subjects and poetical diction to their work (Rahman, 1955: 91-108) and this provided an occasion to break from the rituals of tradition (Soroudi: 11-12). They wrote their poems in free verse rather than verses of equal length, and this freed the poetry from strict prosodic measures. They inserted their personal experiences instead of observing the formal imagery of the classics (Aryanpour, 1993: 436-466). The young poets who initiated this new direction in their poetry were the ones that had grown up in the course of the revolution. Soroudi compares these younger poets' demands to the former poets of the constitution, and argues that they were more aware of Western literary standards than they were of their own classical standards. He states that: "Unlike the older generation, they demanded thorough and drastic literary reforms, a new poetry that would reflect their time not only in subject matter but also in tempo, form, and style" (ibid). Aryanpour agrees with Soroudi that the poetry produced by the poets of the post-constitutional period had a vital place in the publication of papers which criticised the old classical traditions in literature. This caused a conflict with the poetry of the past (Aryanpour, 1993: 436-466). Nima Yushij (1895-1960), a male poet, is considered the father of modern Persian poetry and the pioneer of the new form of poetry (*She'r-e Now* or *She'r-e Nima'i*).

Some of the most influential female poets during the three stages of the constitutional Period included Nim-Taj Lak Salmasi, Alam-Taj Ghaem Maghami (Zhale) (1883-1947), Mehrtaj Rakhshan (1899-1974), Fatemeh Soltan Khanum Farahani (Shahein) (1903-1926), Homa Mahmoudi, Fakhr-e Ozma Arghun (Fakhr Adel Khalatbari) (1898-1966), Badri Tondari (Fani) (1906-unknown) and Shams Kasmaie (1883-1961). Some of these poets are introduced in the following to position their poetry in relation to the literary-linguistic structures outlined in the constitutional period:

Nim-Taj Lak Salmasi (1905-1989), (under the pen name Khakpour), was the most well-known female poet during the constitutional period. In her 200 social-political sonnets, she criticised social norms and promoted the progressive ideas of the Revolution. She is considered to be the pioneering poet in delivering the issues of women to authority. In 1921 a selection of her poems was published in the magazine *Zaban-e Zanan* (Women's Language) (1921: 10-11). She has also two critical social-political sonnets in this magazine and they are a reflection of the society in the constitutional era.

Mehrtaaj Rakhshan (b.1886) is considered a pioneer in the women's movement women in Iran. She was the first Iranian woman to graduate from the American school in Iran, in 1911. She was against polygamy (Cited in Talattof, 2011: 58) and opened schools for girls, and her poetry is about women's social and political condition, patriarchy, women's right to vote, women's work, and their freedom. She compared the situation of women in Iran to women's progress in other countries (ibid). Mehrtaaj wrote over 1,000 lines of poetry, as well as an article in which she attempts to expose the issues related to prostitution and the subjugation of prostitutes (Talattof, 2011: 58). She thanked Mirzadeh Eshghi for his poem about the condition of women in a letter and sent him a historical coin as a gift in 1923. In her poetry, Mehrtaaj challenges the terms of freedom, autonomy and equality. For example, in her lyric poem "*Azadi*" ("Freedom") (Deraye, 2006: 118), she writes:

O, you sad heart, Raise and praise freedom
 Parade in the climate of freedom
 Behold, there should be no sadness in the battles
 Life should be given as a price for freedom
 Endeavors and efforts in this battle field
 To make the captives familiar with freedom
 Life is eternal in the spirit of freedom
 Oh, sacrifice the mortal body for the immortal freedom.

Fatemeh Soltan Khanum Farahani (pen name Shahein) was born in 1903. She was the sister of Adib-Ol-Mamalek and the descendant of Ghaem Magham Farahani. She was very prolific in Arabic literature and history, and she highlights women's place and identity in their social life. In her poetry she criticises women's defined ethics and moral expectations in society. Her poem "*Andarz Be Dokhtar*" ("Advice to a girl") in nine verses is amongst her most famous pieces (Moshir-Salimi, 1956: 20). In one of her poems she writes about the necessity of women's education and its need to rescue the country from its struggles:

The country has fallen into the tornado and knowledge is the only
 saviour for you
 If the girls of the country become knowledgeable, it will make
 them the country's important figures
 Women are the soul and men are the body of the country and the
 soul and body together create the movement and life of a country

Women's delicate fingers will open the nodes of the problems of
the country

(Cited in Kerachi, 2002: 110, translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini)

Homa Mahmoudi was another very active poet of this period, especially in 1922 when she published articles and poetry in the magazine *Nesvan'e Vatankhah* (patriotic women). Her publications mainly centred on the rights and freedoms of women. Her poetry criticised men who point fingers at active women. For example, her critical poem in the *Ganoun* (law) newspaper in 1922 is a response to an article by Barzegar's (a male writer in the Constitutional period) in which he had denounced women's activist movements (1922: 25-26). The poem is in 16 lines and between every couplet she repeats "you are a sower and you will need a shovel". The following is an excerpt:

Oh Barzegar I'm embarrassed of your talk
Don't call women disrespectfully
Don't step over your line
Why do you interfere in womanly talk?
You are a sower¹⁷ and you will need a shovel [.]

(Cited in *Ganoun* newspaper, 1922:2 n.17, translated by Mahrokh
S. Hosseini)

Fakhr-e Ozma Arghun, also known as Fakhr Adel Khalatbari (1898-1966), was a very skilled and successful poet of this era. Her pen name was Fakhri and she wrote 4,000 lines of poetry. She is the mother of Simin Behbahani and was Simin's first literary tutor. Editor of *Future of Iran* and publisher of the *Nameh-e Banovan* (women's letter) magazine, she was also a very active member of the Democratic Party. She established schools for girls and taught in schools for forty years in the fields of literature, languages, geography and history. She knew English, French and Arabic very well. Fakhri published articles about, for instance, compulsory marriage and the condition of women. Some of her famous poems include "*Mehr-e Mihan*" ("Love of Homeland"), "*Arezuy-e Man*" ("My Wish"), "*Mouy-e Siyah*" ("Black Hair"), "*Ehterem-e Zan*" ("Respect of a Woman"), "*Jahan-e Zan*" ("Woman's World"). The following poem by Fakhri concentrates on gender inequality as well as political corruption:

Any representative elected by force or money
Should be expelled from the parliament

¹⁷ The name *Barzegar* means cultivator or sower.

How long shall women be in the captivity of ignorance, men in that
of negligence?

Acquire knowledge, science and techniques

Oh Fakhri, reconstruct this distinction by blood

Clean it up by an ocean of blood.

(Cited in Deraye, 2006: 132)

Badri Tondari, who used the pen name Fani, was born in 1906. She had a good educational background and knew French and Arabic very well. Her work placed emphasis on women's education. She has 2,000 verses of poems and had a realist approach to poetry; her poetry is mainly about women's rights and freedoms. "*Azadi-e Zanan*" ("Women's Freedom"), "*Madar-e Vatan*" ("Homeland Mother") and "*Solh-o Jang*" ("Peace and War") are amongst her most well-known poems. The following poem is some lines from her poem "Women's Freedom":

Why in this country, women's freedom is incomplete?

The West has been successful in achieving women's freedom

If it is compulsory to gain knowledge by men and women

What else will then stop the equal rights between men and women?

Fani, it is worth to put the rest of all your soul and heart

In the way of women's freedom

(Moshir-Salimi, 1956: 26, translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini)

Shams-Jahan Kasmaie, born in 1883, is another poet of this period. Kasmaie was a very independent activist and knew the Turkish and Russian languages very well. Her political and social activities, particularly in the Azerbaijan province, are outstanding. Most of her poems were published in the magazine *Jahan-e Zanan* (women's world), and a few others are published in the magazine *Alam-e Nasavan* (women's universe). Her 500 lines of poetry are mainly about women's education. She also advocated that women should participate in political, social and cultural activities. The following poem is one of her published poems from the *Alam-e Nasavan* magazine; in it she questions the validity of male constructed knowledge:

Hey, you delicate material, until when will you hide?

Until when will you sell your beauty image and line?

Until when will you be handed a drink?

Until when will you be insensible, weak and silent?

This cannot be the end of a human life

Illiterate women who lived before us
 They were respectful and wise
 They were courageous and capable
 They were the leaders of their country
 Iran needs you, women
 In this progressing century, you and I are wanderers
 (Cited in *Alam-e Nasavan* magazine, N.2, 1962, translated by
 Mahrokh S. Hosseini)

Finally, Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) is recognised as one of the most prominent poets of the end of the constitutional period. She graduated in 1924 from the Iran Bethel School, an American high school for girls, and in 1921-22 some of her earliest known poems were published in the *Bahar* (spring) magazine. The first edition of her poetry divan (poetry collection) consists of 156 poems and appeared in 1935. According to Heshmat Moayyad:

Parvin wrote about men and women of different social backgrounds, a wide-ranging array of animals, birds, flowers, trees, cosmic and natural elements, objects of daily life, abstract concepts, all personified and symbolizing her wealth of ideas. Through these figures she holds up a mirror to others showing them the abuses of society and their failure in moral commitment. (Moayyad, 1998: xvii)

Her themes vary from nature, life and death to more secular themes such as social justice, ethics and education (ibid). Malak ol-Shuara Bahar states in a prologue that Parvin's poetry is on the same aesthetic level with the poetry of classical poets of Iran such as Molana, Attar and Jami (Moshir-Salimi, 1956: 83). Her poetry stresses women's freedom, supporting the poor and unsheltered, condemning patriarchal society, respecting the role of being a mother, arguing that women should have good morals, supporting the equality of men and women, and attempting to persuade women not to purchase foreign goods. In her poems "*Fereshte-e Ons*" ("Calm Angel") and "*Zan dar Iran*" ("Women in Iran") Parvin exposes women's state at the end of the Qajar era and the beginning of Reza Shah's reign. In one of her poems Parvin criticises gender subjugation in her society, writing:

Fate does not note in any books
 Men as embodiments of perfection and imperfection in women
 Plato and Socrates became great,

Since their nannies were noble.

In another poem, “Iranian Women”, Parvin goes further and criticises women’s status in society as second-class citizens:

In Iran previously as if a woman was not Iranian
 Her share was nothing but misfortune and distress
 Her life and death was in loneliness
 What was she, if not a prisoner?
 No one like woman lived centuries in darkness
 No one like a woman has been sacrificed in the temple of
 hypocrisy[.]

(Cited in Talattof, 2015: 344)

Parvin’s use of complex vocabulary, sophisticated language and citation from Qur’an is so skilful that the authorship of her poems was interrogated by the poets and scholars of her time. However, she protested this in her poem: “Some literary persons believe Parvin to be a man / She is not a man, this riddle better be solved” (Milani, 1992: 106).

Conclusion

To conclude, the constitutional Revolution for the first time brought a space for women to manoeuvre within and provided a platform to challenge their suppressed rights in a male-dominated society. Most importantly, their aim was to gain the right to education for women. Although the Revolution did not obtain any legal rights for women, their influential presence and participation in political movements turned into a platform for their subsequent movements, particularly in expanding their literature. Several women activists argued that women’s unawareness of their own condition was the main issue blocking their growth. Women began their own societies, published their own magazines and had a persistent role in enlightening women by providing education and establishing girls’ schools. In other words, the constitutional Revolution provided a motivation for women to take action in order to ensure their voices and views were heard.

During this era, many women poets flourished and expressed their life experiences and condition in society through writing poetry. Social and political issues were introduced into women’s poetry, and these poets had very critical voices. They aimed to present a new identity for Iranian women that was different from the classic view; a woman who was not passive but who was assertive in resisting male-dominated

society. Constitutional literature covers literary works from the late nineteenth century until 1922, and the literature of this period was produced to reform the social and political issues of the country. This chapter has argued that the literature of this period can be studied in three parts: the pre-constitutional period (late nineteenth century to 1906), the revolutionary (militant) period (1906-1911) and the post-constitutional period (1911-1922).

In the pre-Constitutional period women poets wrote poems by following the classical pattern, in a return to the traditions of the classical masters. However, with the development of social reform writers began to criticise the ruling authorities, and poets began focusing their themes and content on the homeland (*Vatan*) rather than an imaginary beloved. Later, in the militant period, women expressed their issues for the first time in parliament and in the magazines of the time. Male poets also issued their demands in their own poems. Poetry became the main medium to express one's feelings; as Milani states, "poetry became a forum for demands for equal rights by a wide spectrum of women" (Milani, 1992: 31). Although poetry began to be reformed in many aesthetic ways, the didactic tone of the past remained. The main thematic choices for the poetry of this period were admiration for democracy, criticism of the authorities, justification of human rights, anti-religious and anti-imperialism themes, discourse on women's veiling, and stress on the importance of education for women. Several foreign vocabularies were introduced and inserted into the poetry. Young poets who grew up during the course of the Revolution and were aware of Western literature began to break with traditional poetry and write in free verse, which liberated the poets from prosodic measures.

Although there were fewer women poets in the first stage of the Revolution, this phase can be considered as the stage of an awakening, the enlightening and the educating of Iranian women, with the newly established girls' schools and women's magazines enunciating women's self-identity. It was in this period that Iranian women realised the importance of education in liberating them from patriarchal captivity. Although many of the poems produced by the women poets in this period follow the classical poetic conventions without expressing their own voice, their courage for writing and publishing for the first time in the history of Iran were sources of inspiration for later women poets in later periods of Iranian history.

During the post-nationalism period, as will be demonstrated, women were faced with many difficulties and obstacles, and the British conspired to stop the women's

movement from progressing. Reza Khan's coup in 1921 and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty restored authoritarian power and this affected Iran for the next two decades. One of the most significant changes under Reza Shah's era was the struggle to modernise and Westernise gender relations, that had been neglected by the authorities in the constitution Period. Women's education and the removal of the veil became the primary tasks of the Shah in modernising Iran. Women were now allowed to register at Tehran University. Although unveiling among women was growing in the public domain, the Shah imposed the unveiling decree and women were encouraged to wear Western clothing.

The need for modernism in women's literature started in the constitutional period and many literary figures supported political and social liberties in Reza Shah's era. During this time, the theme of defiance of Reza Shah's autocratic rule developed but many literary figures were silenced by the state and a tendency for depoliticised subjects arose among writers and poets of the time. In other words, if in the constitutional period, the country's politics started to breathe a little, and newspapers, printing, and political and social organisations started to flourish, in Reza Shah's era writing and women's associations suffered from more strict control by the Shah.

Chapter Two: The Pahlavi Era, the Women's Movement and Literature (1925-1979)

Introduction

In this chapter the women's literary movement under the Pahlavi dynasty will be studied in two distinguishable eras: Reza Shah's Era (1921-1941) and the 2nd Pahlavi, Mohammad-Reza Shah's Era (1941-1979). For each of the eras Iranian women's literary activities will be identified by the representation of a particular ideological issue, such as the social or gender reform movements. It will be demonstrated how literary meaning and the semantic fields in each era are measured, restructured and developed by the poets' discourse.

Reza Shah's Era (1921-1941): Reform, the Women's Movement and Literature

One of the major effects of the Russian Revolution of 1917 was to make Iran a battleground between the empires of Russia and Britain. Britain sent its troops into Iran to attack Russia, hoping to counteract the Revolution. However, this resulted in Soviet Union occupancy in parts of northern Iran and the formation of the Persian Soviet Socialist Republic (known as the Soviet Republic of Gilan).¹⁸ Ahmad Shah, the Qajar government's ruler, lost control over other cities and most of the central parts of Iran came under the control of either British or Soviet forces (Subani, 2013: 244). According to the British military attaché to Tehran, by the end of 1920 the Soviets arranged to march in Tehran with a paramilitary force of some 1,500 Jangalis, Kurds, Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Abrahamian argues that the socio-political chaos in the capital that followed the constitutional Revolution resulted in the elimination of Ahmad Shah's power and Reza Khan's subsequent coup (1982: 117).

On 21 February 1921 Reza Khan arrived in the capital with a Cossack Brigade, taking control of Tehran in a coup d'état. He imposed the suspension of the Shah's power and commanded that Seyyed Zia-eddin Tabatabaee be appointed Prime Minister (Abrahamian, 1982: 118). Reza Khan began his role as Commander of the Iranian Army and minister of war. Later he was called *Sardar Sepah* (Commander-in-Chief of the Army) until he took the throne. He immediately set up a cabinet in Tehran to facilitate his policies of modernisation and began rearranging the country's laws (ibid).

¹⁸ The movement lasted from June 1920 until September 1921. It was established by Mirza Koochak Khan, a leader of the constitutionalist movement of Gilan, and his Jangali (Foresters Movement) partisans, with the assistance of the Soviet Red Army.

Finally, in October 1925 Reza Khan forced parliament to remove and officially exile Ahmad Shah, and appointed himself as the next king of Iran on December 15 1925 (Daniel, 2001: 135).

Reza Shah formed a strong army, centralised power with the aim of unifying the nation and regulated the country's economic system. Abrahamian argues that Reza Shah's aim was to transform "the multi-ethnic empire into a unified state with one people, one nation, one language, one culture, and one political authority" (Abrahamian, 1982: 142). Reza Khan's unified language project resulted in the integration of different cultural groups of society, which facilitated the state's modernising projects. As Afary notes, "less than 50 percent of the nation's citizens spoke Persian. Now an ambitious project of public education in Persian aimed to integrate women's assemblies, ethnic minorities, Sunni Muslims, and non-Muslims into the state" (Afary, 2009: 145).

The Women's Movement in Reza Shah's Period

It can be observed from existing research on Reza Shah's era that many women's issues remained unresolved (Cronin, 2012: 175). Although women benefited from reforms in their education and some other changes under Reza Shah, women's organisations also suffered from strict control by the Shah. Keddie states that "from 1917 to 1927 several new women's newspapers and organisations were created" (2007: 87). However, Reza Shah closed almost all of them. Organisations such as The Patriotic Women's League were dismantled in 1932; their offices were destroyed and their publications were burned in the presence of the state's forces (Abrahamian, 1982: 139). The Shah was very intolerant of left-wing parties, especially the *Tudeh* and the Communist party (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994: 51). Many communist organisations such as *Jamiyat-e Peyk-e Saadat-e Nesvan* (messengers for women's prosperity) and *Bidari-e Zanan* (the awakening of women) were prevented from carrying out any activities (Tabari & Yeganeh, 1982: 113). Paidar argues that other non-Communist organisations also could not escape from the Shah's control: "*Women of Iran* [a women's newspaper] was forced to stop their publications and its founder Shahnaz Azad was imprisoned for criticising Reza Shah [...] *Women's Universe*, which had been running for thirteen years and enjoyed great popularity among women was banned" (Paidar, 1995: 102).

On the other hand, some important changes in marriage and divorce laws were introduced by the state in 1931. First of all, the registration of all marriages was required. Secondly, women achieved the right to ask for divorce under certain

situations, and thirdly the marriage age for girls was increased to fifteen and for boys to eighteen (Amin, 2002: 129). The law, according to Amin, withdrew the idea that the state supported 'male guardianship'. It also liberated women and provided them with excuses to carry on their education and not to marry at a young age. Amin States that the marriage law "did provide modern Iranian womanhood with the beginnings of the alliance it craved with the state. It also provided the Pahlavi state with a claim on the loyalties of modern Iranian womanhood" (ibid: 129).

The state also supported women's contributions in public affairs and financed the development of more schools for girls. While the Shah suppressed women's independent organisations under the auspices of the government, he nevertheless insisted on women's welfare and educational accomplishments. The number of female students increased from 16.9 per cent of the school population to 28 per cent between 1924 and 1944 (ibid: 147). Hamideh Sedghi states that women's participation in the labour force in Reza Shah's era also experienced great expansion, when compared with African and Latin American countries:

Most employed women were concentrated in the service rather than other sectors of the economy; and the typical pattern of wage work was reversed, as labor force participation was highest among married women between the ages of 20 and 29 years. (Sedghi, 2007:10)

The Shah's attempt to enter into the global market paved the way for women to participate in modernisation schemes and this facilitated the presence of unveiled, educated women in the labour force before the unveiling decree became mandatory (Sedghi: 8). Sedigheh Daulatabadi, for example, the editor of *Zaban-e Zanan* (Women's Language), is among the pioneering figures in the Iranian women's movement; she appeared in Western attire in public after her return from the International Women's Conference in Paris in 1926. She continued to go without a headscarf for nine years before the 1936 unveiling decree made it mandatory not to wear one. In the same year, the Shah made the guard available in the streets to "protect" women who were willing to be unveiled in public. The Shah was so determined in this project that in 1928 he clashed with the religious authorities who had criticised the Queen for not covering her face in the holy shrine at Qom (Sedghi: 85). In the same year, parliament approved a new dress code for men with the aim of forming a more unified sense of national identity (Sarshar, 2003: 175-196).

However, both the Shah and the religious authorities were very critical of any independent women's liberation movement and suppressed such attempts at once. The Shah established a formal women's centre, *Kanoon-e Banovan*. Paidar argues that "even the pro-Reza Shah poet, Zandokht Shirazi, was not allowed to maintain her own women's organisation and magazine" (ibid). The state replaced any independent women's movement with "state feminism" (Sedghi, 2007: 58).

Kanoon-e Banovan was a semi-governmental organisation and the first officially approved women's organisation in the country, led by the Shah's own daughter, Ashraf Pahlavi. The centre was set up by the Shah to increase women's education and instruct women on housekeeping and child raising programs. The other main task of the *Kanoon* was to set up campaigns for unveiling women. Lower class women still considered unveiling to be a great sin (Bamdad, 1977: 28, 30, 231). The centre was closely controlled by the state and any feminist attitudes were suppressed by the government. The highly controlling stance of the government and the shifting nature of women's organisations in Reza Shah's era, when compared to the previous regime, are indicative of the Shah's perspective on women's rights. The previous organisations were mostly politically active organisations, but the political attitudes of organisations in the Shah's era were forcefully limited by the Shah. Furthermore, the aim of the Shah's organisation for women was not only to depoliticise and suspend women's movements but also to formulate an impression of a modernised Iran (Mahdi: 2004).

With the rise of state control and repression, feminist activity declined. However, to present a modern Iran to the rest of the world, the Shah needed to comply with women's participation in the second Congress of Oriental Women held in Tehran in 1932. During the Congress, an important talk about women's condition in Iran was delivered by Iran Arani. Arani analysed the Shah's state and condemned him for considering women as second class citizens or even animals (Ansari & Martin, 2014: 216). Homa Nategh (1983) cited in Paidar (1995: 103) asserts that Arani emphasised that "the emancipation of women can only be attained by women themselves". Arani's solution for the emancipation of women was for them to be economically independent by entering into the production line and not blocking themselves in "the four walled residence of a family any more" (Nategh, 1983:16). In addition, the Congress paid respect to the deceased communist Muhtaram Eskandari, who is regarded as one of the leading modern feminists in Iran. The Congress supported women's suffrage, equal salary and job opportunities, and the elimination of polygamy and prostitution. In 1933,

a year after the Congress's assembly in Tehran, active women proposed the Congress's resolution for women's electoral rights to the parliament in Tehran. Although parliament did not approve their request, the state started a series of reforms intended for the protection of women in different social fields.

In conjunction with these rather conservative reforms, the elimination of *Chador* (the Iranian style of veiling) from women, particularly women in working society, was very challenging. As Reza Shah required an immediate identification with modern Western values, women's covering (the veil) did not fit into his modernising plan and the veil turned into a sign of a tribal past. As a result, many modern and middle-class women started to remove their veils. Sedghi explains the acceptance of removing the veil in Iranian society as a gradual process. According to Sedghi the acceptance of unveiling became greater among urban and educated women from the 1950s to the late 1970s (Sedghi, 2007: 38).

Until 1936, publicly criticising women's veiling was against the law and *Urf* (publicly recognised Sharia laws), and going against it was to become subject to prosecution by the government. For instance, in 1923 Ebrahim Khajeh-Nouri, the editor of an article in *Nameh-ye Javanan* (youth paper), was criticised by the clergy for an attack on the tradition of veiling. He was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison (Ostad- Malik, 1988: 105).

Due to this resistance from society, writers rarely had the courage to question the institution of the veil. An exception to this was the Iranian male poets in diaspora, who expressed their anger in their poetry without any restraints. Abul-Gasem Lahuti (1887-1957), for example, after being sentenced by a court in Qom to death, fled to Turkey, and there wrote a poem, "*Be Dokhtaran-e Iran*" ("To Iranian Girls"), published in 1960. The poem is about the hijab and the liberation of women. In this poem education and gaining knowledge are mentioned as the most important factors to be considered by women, rather than their beauty. Lahuti questions the hijab and endorses education. He states that to raise a rational and progressive generation, mothers need to be educated and enlightened:

Remove the black *chador* from your face
Educate your son and daughter: knowledge, effort and liberty
(Aryanpur: 382-383).

Mirzadeh Eshghi (1894-1924) was another male poet who questioned the veil, in his poem "*Kafan-e Siyah*" ("The Black Shroud"), written while he was in Turkey in 1917.

However, a few months after his return to the country, he was harassed by gunmen and was silenced forever:

What a shame, man a slave, woman a slave
 What has she done, to be ashamed of man?
 What are these disgraceful veils and ru-bandeh [face-covers]?
 If it is not a shroud, then tell me what is this ru-bandeh?
 (Derayeh, 2006: 84)

Zandokht Shirazi (1909-1953) was an exception, a prominent Iranian feminist, best known as Fakhr al-Moluk. As a poet and schoolteacher, who established *Majma'e Enghelabi-e Nesvan* (the revolutionary society of women) in Shiraz in 1927, in her poems or articles she often symbolically connected unveiling with liberation, enlightenment and the education of women. Shirazi's poems on the theme of veiling were published in *Habl el-Matin, Asr-e Azadi (The Age of Freedom)* from 1927 to 1933 (Paidar, 1995: 95). Unfortunately, the poems left by Shirazi that discuss her views on other issues concerning women are very few in number. To give an example, she wrote under a photo of herself without a veil:

Hey, you the photo, you are happy for my photo
 you are free from hijab and garments
 (Hosseini, 2005, *Women's Magazine*)

In another poem Shirazi directly criticises the institution of veiling:

I don't understand what is this shroud and veil for?
 If we are human what is this misery?
 (ibid)

Reza Shah shaped his decree on unveiling after his state visit to Turkey in the summer of 1934 and his position on the issue of veiling changed. He further facilitated the reception of the unveiling decree by attending a graduation ceremony at the Women's Teacher Training College in Tehran in 1936 with his wife and daughters unveiled (Fathi, 1985: 108). This incident became a symbolic point for women's emancipation, and Reza Shah subsequently banned women from wearing the *Chador* and veil in public. The unveiling decree became a compulsory practice in the country. In the same year, women were allowed to enter the University of Tehran. Amineh Pakravan was the first female lecturer and Dr Fatimah Sayah was the first woman to become a full professor, in 1938.

Reza Shah's veiling decree in 1936 had controversial effects on the women's movement. On the one hand, the religious authorities interpreted the decree as being against Islamic ethics and determined that the movement's aim was to "make women naked" and display their bodies in public. On the other hand, the state persuaded many to advocate the decree as a progressive measure. Although the Shah promoted a Western appearance on the surface of Iranian society, he was not successful in changing the mentality of the people with regards to the status of women (Ansari & Martin, 2014: 216).

As part of his modernisation plans, Reza Shah ran the Women's Awakening project for five years (1936-1941). The project was a government-based plan that proposed new prospects for women in employment and education with only one precondition: women were to discard their veils in public. Afary refers to Women's Awakening as a "veritable Panopticon" and she explains that the project was organised "to implement Reza Shah's new dress code with ironically, administrative and disciplinary mechanisms enforcing these measures. Local authorities arrested anyone on the streets who resisted the new orders. They prevented veiled women from entering public baths, theaters, stores, bus stations, and, eventually, even shrines" (Afary, 2009: 156).

Followers of the Women's Awakening project believed that the veil prevented women from sport activities, from interaction with society and held back their progress in the nation. Supporters of the project were mostly from the upper and middle classes, doctors, nurses, teachers and civil servants (ibid). However, mandatory unveiling was not an easy process to be accepted, especially by the religious, merchants and old middle classes, and it gradually encountered difficulties. Afary explains that "By the 1930s, many young, educated men, who had been exposed to Western gender practices, simply refused to marry a woman sight unseen" (ibid: 157). Afary continues that "in some homes, the women decided to remain indoors for years, while some prominent clerics prevented their daughters from attending school" (ibid). Moreover, reasonable modern clothing was not affordable for the poor and lower classes, and as a result they started to exhibit opposition to the law (ibid). Many religious authorities expressed their opposition. In one street opposition in Mashhad in July 1935, Reza Shah ordered the guard to start shooting into the unarmed crowd who were demonstrating against mandatory Western dress codes (Armstrong, 2009: 297). Hamid Dabashi believes that the bloody protest in Mashhad further facilitated the Shah's enforcement of the

unveiling. Dabashi argues that the massacre mean that, from then on, “Reza Shah implemented his universal dress code and the forceful unveiling of Iranian women with very minimal (even negligible) opposition by the clergy” (Dabashi, 1993: xv) and forcefully silenced the religious authority.

Consequently, the unveiling decree and Women’s Awakening are correlated to the 1931 reforms in Marriage Law, as well as to the outcome of The Congress of Oriental Women held in Tehran in 1932 (Amin, 2002:248). As Amin notes, “during the Women’s Awakening, the state assumed guardianship over individual women in requiring them to unveil” (ibid: 248). Men lost the authority of guardianship under the Marriage Law of 1931. The state’s new project reduced the guardianship and control of men over women.

Despite the Shah’s secular modernising gender projects, many aspects of women’s lives continued to be practiced in accordance with Sharia law. Sedghi argues that:

The influence of Western-inspired laws were considerable, as was the expansion of state power in the sphere of religious laws. Yet changes introduced in the legal status of women, especially in marriage, divorce, and family relations, were slight, especially in comparison to the state’s encouragement of women’s education. (Sedghi, 2007: 75)

Polygamy and temporary marriage remained untackled measures in Reza Shah’s state. Although the practices were not recognised and easily denounced by the upper and middle classes, the Shah did not attempt to reform them. One reason for his refusal could be that the Shah realised that banning these practices would entail a serious opposition by the religious authorities, who would have found the reform to be against Islamic ethics. Afary believes this is very unlikely, however, because “after all, he supported the even more controversial measure of banning the veil, a more direct affront to the clergy” (2009: 154). However, Reza Shah’s own personal life might be a clue to this matter – he was married four times. The Shah’s first marriage is recorded as a temporary marriage and he had one daughter from this marriage. His second marriage was an officially registered one, before his work in the Cossack Brigade. He married Taj al-Moluk, daughter of an officer. Later, Taj al-Moluk became the official Queen of Iran and they had four children. He also had two other registered marriages after Taj al-Moluk, while he was a commander in Tehran. The Shah divorced Turan amir Solaymani, finding her not suited to his taste. However, he was very fond of his fourth

wife, Esmat Dowlatshahi, and became very attentive to her. They had five children together. Reza Shah's personal marriage experience could indicate how the practices of polygamy and temporary marriage persisted, since they exclusively favoured men in the society. Afary explains that:

He [Reza Shah] discarded a lower-class temporary wife and married the daughter of his superior officer. Later, he took a third and fourth wife from the aristocracy, bolstering his humble social background. Most men were likewise reluctant to give up such privileges which increased their power at home and in society. (2009:157)

Despite some minimal reform of women's rights, the final years of Reza Shah's leadership were allocated to institutionalising the educational system and to the industrialisation of the country. However, the Shah's increasingly repressive practices and ignoring of even reliable subordinates resulted in discontent and frustration by the end of his reign (Keddie, 2006:104). Reza Shah's interest in national unification, for instance, resulted in more anger amongst the different religious and linguistic minorities. The minorities' schools lost their license to teach and many members of the minorities were killed or arrested (Abrahamian, 1982: 163).

Finally, on 25 August 1941, the Allied powers, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, attacked and seized Iran by a massive air, land and naval invasion. The assault was because of Reza Shah's declaration of neutrality in World War II. He denied the Allies' request to use Iran as a transport corridor to send arms to Russia for its war with Germany. Moreover, the Allied powers asked for the banishment of the German citizens residing in Iran, and the Shah refused this (ibid: 164).

The invasion of the Allied powers, together with the massive discontent from different groups and supporters, further weakened the Shah's power, and he was forced to abdicate in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in 1941.

Literature in Reza Pahlavi's Era

The reign of the Pahlavi dynasty began a new era for Iranian literature, specifically in the field of poetry. Under Pahlavi, different experiences flourished. Social and political issues of the time, along with the influence of reforms, were contemplated through the poems. This research will focus only on the poetry of the Pahlavi era, divided into the Reza Shah period (1922-1941) and the Mohammad Reza Shah period (1941-1979). An

inclusive review of literary themes in the first Pahlavi era reveals two literary tendencies or styles.

In the early years of Reza Shah's reign, similar to during the Constitutional Revolution, the state attempted to modernise and establish a liberal school of thought in accordance with the needs of the time. This style supported the political and social liberties of the Shah. Many writers welcomed the new policies of the Shah. The Iranian literati and intellectuals, before Reza Shah's period, had attempted to criticise the atmosphere of their society in different magazines and publications. The goal at that time was to transform social conditions and to institute a literary style which could provide a new kind of literature, without concentrating solely on a resistance literature. The resistance literature disregarded the existing conditions and realities of society to categorise, for example, Reza Shah as a liberal figure. Reza Shah used this momentum on the part of writers to propagate his ideology, but from the very beginning of his rule, he attempted to exercise very strict control over the media and publications of the time (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994: 50). Censorship became stronger than before and the Shah ordered the police to control all publications. It is noted that "the press could have been a useful tool for Reza Shah, who quickly applied his regulative authority to control access to the medium. Only those who would cooperate with him were issued a license, and even this privilege was subject to censorship" (ibid: 51).

The press¹⁹ under Reza Shah was ordered not to get in the way of the masses or to give them a voice in matters that did not concern them and, more importantly, not to criticise the Shah's state (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994:51) – otherwise, newspapers would be banned or censored. Most of the women's organisations were closed between the years 1921-1936, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, we do not observe many active female writers and activists in this era, and the few who are active follow a similar strategy and style as male writers. As discussed above, women's poetry in this period focused more on advocating women's education and occupation. For example, they could not openly write about or advocate unveiling. According to Fathi, "most of the women's publications and organisations became active shortly after World War I" (Fathi, 1985: 95). Comparing the number of female and male activists and writers, both in the constitutional and Reza Shah periods, reveals a high number of male writers and

¹⁹ For information about magazines, newspapers and publication in Reza Shah's period, which advocated the Shah's modernizing policies, refer to Ghazalsofi, M. (1998) 'A Political Review of Iranian Contemporary Poetry.' *Persian Language & Literature*. Iran Chamber Society.

poets in the same periods. One important reason for women writers being in the minority could be that they came from the upper class of society, and fewer women were involved from the middle classes. These women came from wealthy families with higher socio-economic and educational backgrounds (Fathi, 1985: 99). Upper-class women were more independent and had less worries regarding their financial condition. By comparison, lower-class women, due to not having the same equal opportunities compared to upper-class women, almost lost their chance to display their skills in writing.

In *Nevisandegan-e Pishro-e Iran* (Iranian progressive writers), Sepanlou, the Iranian poet and critic, argues that Reza Shah's suppression and censorship provided four primary themes (1986: 134-135) in the literature of the period (1921-1936). These themes can be considered as an outline of literature produced in the Reza Shah's period:

1. Writing about historic literature, Iranology, patriotism and past nationalism e.g. translating books written in the Pahlavi language or admiring the classic poets of Iran such as Ferdowsi.
2. Propagating moral rhetoric, e.g. the evils of gambling or condemnation of drinking
3. Western Romanticism and epics of bravery
4. Avoiding political subjects and endorsing reforms. Many writers at the beginning of the Shah's reigning were charmed by his slogans. However, they changed after observing the Shah's autocratic rule and a theme of defiance emerged.

According to Sepanlou it is not surprising that Sadegh Hedayat decided to learn and use the Pahlavi language for his work at this time, for example "*Bouff-e Koor*" ("Blind Owl"), which is a depoliticised work of the era (ibid). Ghazalsofi (1998) cited in Abedini (1987:79) argues that:

As a whole from 1922 to 1941 the progressive and combatant social literature of the revolution era was replaced by sentimental criticism of individual immoral deeds and a love of past Iran replaced a progressive patriotism. The pressure of the censor stopped the growth of story writing and romantic and melancholy themes replaced the angry and lyrical stories that were popular during the constitutional period.

The poets of the Reza Shah period can be studied under two distinct groups: first, the poets who maintained their political opposition, although suppressed by the state, and

second, the poets who didn't want to take their own political stand and who followed the state's objectives. Few poets could resist the pressure in the first group. In both of these groups the poets could be described as poets who followed the style and form of the classical Persian tradition, and those poets who were interested in literary reforms.

The first group of poets consisted of the prominent writers and poets who had had an active voice in the constitutional period. They displayed their opposition to the realities of their society in their writings and they were interested in literary reforms. However, this mood gradually faded in Reza Shah's era because of his repressive control over their publications. Shafiei-Kadkani lists some of the important figures of this group, such as Eshqi who was assassinated in the early years of Reza Shah's reign. Iraj Mirza became silent under the pressures of the Shah in the early stages of the latter's reign (Shafiei-Kadkani, 1980: 346-347). Shafiei-Kadkani further refers to the one of the most prominent poets and critics of the constitutional era, Sayed Ashraf-Al-Din Gilani, known as *Nasime shomal* that left behind his political premises of the past in this era and the Shah enforced to close down his publications. Or there was Abolghassem Lahuti, a Communist poet, who fled Iran to the Soviet Union. Abolghassem Aref-e Ghazvini sheltered in Hamedan later in his life and died there in January 1934. And, finally, we can refer to Nima Youshij, who was practicing his skills in silence for almost the entire period of the Shah's reign. He only published some of his free verse in the last years of the reign (1939). His poetry style, according to Shafiei-Kadkani, was not understandable in this era, but after the Shah's abdication and the presence of a free press revolutionised Persian poetry, his style became a popular trend among young poets (ibid).

However, within this group, who were either depoliticised by the state or lost their voice, there were a few poets who advocated the classical trends of traditional poetry. These poets were Bahar (1884-1951), Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda (1879-1956), Aref (1882-1934) and Parvin Etesami (1907-1941).

The other important female poet of the Reza Shah era was Fakhr-e Ozma Arghun, also known as Fakhr Adel Khalatbari (1898-1966), was another female poet of this era who began writing during the constitutional period. Another important figure is Zandokht Shirazi (1909-1953), whose poetry has already been discussed. She was a prominent Iranian feminist, poet and schoolteacher. She was an activist from an early age and established *Majma-e Enghelabi-e Nesvan* (revolutionary society of women) in Shiraz in 1927, at the age of 18. (Nine months later it was banned by the state.) She

published the *Dokhtran-e Iran* (daughters of Iran) newspaper on women's issues from 1931, initially in Shiraz; it was later closed down by the Shah (Fathi, 1985: 95). The newspaper printed radical poems and articles about feminist movements in other countries (ibid).

The second group of poets did not involve themselves in political matters; in a way they were favouring the Shah (Fathi, 1985: 95). They adored the Shah's reforms and policies in their poetry. This group (all male poets) comprised of Vahid Dastgerdi (1879-1942), known for being *Armaghan* magazine's editor, Amir-ol Sher Naderi (1884-unknown), Ebrat Mosahebi (1866-1942), Sadegh Sarmad (1907-1960) and Abbas Forat (1894-1968). Most of their poems were published in *Kanoon-e Shoara* magazine. The purpose of their poetry was to misrepresent the realities of society under the Shah's power (ibid). According to Shafiei-Kadkani their poetry was not meaningful or even important (ibid: 348). The prevailing themes of their poetry were admiration of the Shah's actions, love lyrics, ethical rhetoric and encouragement of sport activities. However, there were also a few poets who were not interested in politics of any kind and had no overt political purposes or activities in their past. These poets were interested in the social history of the country and concentrated mostly on literary reform, language and the form of their poems. Poets such as Lotf-Ali Souratgar (1900-1969), Gholamreza Rashid-Yasemi (1895-1951) and Gholam-Ali Ra'di Azarakhshi (1909-1999) followed this trend. They were all male poets and complied with some comparative changes in their poetry (ibid).

Reza Shah's increasing control, together with his intense censorship of women's activities, repressed women's organisations and ultimately they were dismantled in the mid-1930s. Although the Shah repressed these movements, he still continued to keep his appearance as a progressive leader. There were minor advances for women, granting them new rights in their educational accomplishments, but no considerable changes in marriage, divorce and other gender issues.

The Shah's imprudent policies destabilised and weakened female activists' stance in their writing, and the poets' work was often undermined. The Shah's ruthless and forceful tactics had an impact on writers and poets' thematic choices, and the Shah failed to receive the support of the majority of poets. For example, Nima Yushij (1895-1960) preferred to stay silent, almost until the end of Reza Shah's reign. Most writers chose depoliticised themes and concentrated on safer subjects such as history, patriotism, moral rhetoric, Western epics or simply advocating the Shah's reforms, for

example reflecting on the importance of women's education. Those who resisted were silenced forever or threatened with death. Some writers changed their position of admiring the Shah's reforms to more defiant themes after observing his autocratic governance.

Several of Reza Shah's reform measures were not as liberating as they seemed. Conservative notions of motherhood and housekeeping skills were viewed as having a high priority in the Shah's reign, and the Women's Centre (*Kanoon-e Banovan*) promoted these concepts. In general, the Shah failed to consider women's position and demands. Sanasarian argues that there is a huge difference between giving women rights on paper, and making illiterate village women aware of their rights or encouraging them to practice those rights (Sanasarian, 1982: 97).

With Reza Shah's departure from Iran in September 1941, Iran was occupied by foreigners, but generally people were relieved and pleased to see the dictator abdicate from the country. During the following twelve years of limited freedom the work of poets flourished into poetry of hope and victory. Their poems became a platform for liberty. Anti-religious themes began to grow in the works of many poets and Persian literature found momentum and began to bless pre-Islamic Iran, question Sharia law and Arabs' cultural impact in Iran. This literature desired fast change and the Westernisation of the country.

After the abdication of the Shah, Mohammad-Reza Shah promised to follow the constitutional laws. During the new Shah's reign, new political and democratic organisations began to grow and different organisations for women were established. Several of these independent organisations felt the necessity to concentrate on women's rights, and many writers and poets had joined these parties to promote liberty.

Mohammad Reza Shah's Era (1941-1979): Reform, the Women's Movement and Literature

The Second World War weakened Reza Shah's regime as a result of the Anglo-Russian occupation and upon Reza Shah's abdication, his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, took over power. He was the last monarch of Iran before the 1979 revolution. The new Shah's reign could be explained as a fresh dictatorship, since the Shah had strong power over all government operations. The new Shah's power was manifested essentially through his family, the Senate, and the State Organisation for Intelligence and Security (SAVAK). During his reign, the oil industry of the country was nationalised by

Mohammad Mosaddegh, the elected Prime Minister. However, Mosaddegh was forcefully removed from power by a CIA supported coup d'état in 1953 which restored foreign oil companies to Iran and consolidated the power of the Shah (Kinzer, 2011: 195-196).

During the economic crisis in the late 1950s Mohammad Reza Shah attempted to recover the collapsed social and economic foundations formed under his father's power. His long-term aim of transforming Iran into a global economic and industrial power, along with the support of his American advisors, led him to introduce the White Revolution²⁰ reforms or the "revolution of the Shah and People" (Sedghi, 2007: 104). The reforms of the White Revolution were attempts to legitimise the newly gained power of the Shah. The Shah could easily remove the influence of landlords by his reforms, and in the meantime, could gain the support of workers and peasants (Siavoshi, 1990: 23). Wagner argues that "when the White revolution was introduced, only a few hundred families controlled nearly all of the land in Iran. Some three-quarters of all Iranians lived and worked as peasants, many living in primitive homes in rural communities" (Wagner, 2010: 42). The White Revolution was officially put to a national referendum on January 26, 1963; it consisted of 19 elements that were introduced over a period of 15 years. Some of the programs of this project consisted of abolishing feudalism and land reforms, the nationalisation of forests to protect national resources, profit sharing for workers in industries, formation of literary and health corps, especially in villages, extending women's suffrage, and improving the quality of education (ibid: 41).

However, the White Revolution received much criticism from religious leaders (*Ulama*) and landlords. These two groups opposed the Shah's land reforms, which created a deep gap between them and the Shah. The religious leaders, who came mostly from wealthy families, were threatened by the Shah's reforms. They attacked provisions of the reforms that would support women's right to vote and claimed that Sharia law limited the vote to men and not women (Sedghi, 2007: 96). The landowners also showed their anger when their lands were sold at deflated prices to the working classes. The Shah suddenly lost the support of important allies, while the country was confronted with other challenges (Wagner, 2010: 42). Six months after the referendum,

²⁰ According to *Time Magazine* (11 February 1966) the name, White Revolution, is attributed to the fact it was bloodless. Sedghi also states that "the intention was to contrast it with the 'Red' or Bolshevik revolution and the 'black' or clergy-instigated upheaval" (Sedghi, 2007: 104).

many people, including women, students and merchants, demonstrated in the streets against the Shah's reforms. Ayatollah Khomeini was amongst the voices criticising the revolution, in his speeches and works; he considered it a dangerous risk to Islam (ibid).

Along with his clash with religious groups, the Shah encountered other oppositional movements such as the National Front, in which Dr Mosaddegh challenged the Shah's reform legislation. Other threatening groups were the Tudeh party, mostly active in the 1940s and 1950s, the Fedayun-e-Khalq, the most popular leftist group during the 1970s, and the Mojahedeen-e Khalq (Rosecrance, 2001: 141-142).

Ultimately, the Shah's reforms could not be accomplished and they simply brought more discontent among various groups and ideologies. He lost major support due to his strong and coercive policy of modernisation and secularisation. Furthermore, the recognition of Israel and corruption issues surrounding himself, his family and the ruling elite excluded him from absolute power. Political unrest turned into an uprising and on 17 January 1979 the Shah was forced to leave the country, the Iranian monarchy was formally brought to an end, and Iran was declared an Islamic Republic led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Women's Movement in Mohammad Reza Shah's Period (1941-1978)

Upon Reza Shah's abdication women's organisations and political parties experienced a relaxation of censorship because of the state's instability. Women's rights organisations advocated equal individual rights more openly than before (Beck & Neshat, 2004: 112). Most of these organisations joined forces with political groups. Some of the women's publications and journals which had ceased in the Reza Shah period, such as *Zaban-e Zanan* (Women's Language), reappeared. The unveiling decree was removed and many middle-class women wore their veils freely. The veil for them represented notions of morality, going against Western norms, and protection (Afary, 2009: 187-188). In 1963 women were granted the right to vote and to run for parliament (Esfandiari, 1997: 28-29). The Tudeh Party Women's League was the most consistent and active supporter of women's rights in this period, with a reported membership of 2,500 women (Moghissi, 2005: 92). In 1944 Homa Houshmandar published *Bidari-e Ma* (Our Awakening) and the goals of the organisation were outlined: "to struggle for women's social and political rights; to organise and mobilise women; publication of a women's journal; cultural advance and fighting illiteracy; struggle against prostitution; fight moral decadence; and the struggle against exploitation of women" (ibid). However, there was no explicit

reference to the issues of marriage, divorce, custody of children, and polygamy in the party's publication or plans. Instead, they gradually intended to advocate for Soviet interests in Iran. In 1949 the Women's League was changed to the Organisation of Democratic Women (*Tashkilat-e Democratic-e Zanan*) and branches were opened in a number of different cities (ibid: 93).

The period after the White Revolution can be represented as a rapid mobilisation of women's groups in Iran. The Women's Organisation of Iran (WOI), created by the Shah in November 1966, brought several women's organisations under one title (Shahidian, 2002: 102-104). Although this resulted in a degree of depoliticisation and the loss of independence for several organisations, and more control and power for the Shah, there were certain positive outcomes.

The WOI by provided literacy classes, women's health and family planning information, legal support of women in their marriage, divorce and inheritance rights, and many other kinds of support (Afary, 1996: 211). By 1975, 349 branches of the WOI had been established in 120 provinces in Iran (Beck & Neshat: 117-121). In 1967 parliament ratified the Family Protection Law, which provided more rights in the fields of marriage, divorce and child custody. It also increased the marriage age for girls to fifteen and Family Protection Courts were established (Esfandiari: 30) to observe the disputes and issues according to the law. Polygamy was limited and men had to seek their wives' consent and the Family Protection Court's permission if they wanted to marry a second wife, while men had to seek legal permission from a Family Protection Court for divorcing their wives (ibid). Ziba Mir-Hosseini in Afshar's *Women and Politics in the Third World* (1996) argues that these amendments were opposed by some religious leaders, such as Ayatollah Khomeini, who proclaimed that "women whose divorces had been decreed by the court against their husbands would be committing adultery if they remarried" (cited in Joseph, 2000: 297)). Once more the legal marriage age for women was raised, to eighteen, and twenty for men, by the Family Protection Law in 1975. Mrs Parsa became the first female minister in Iran. Women gained the right of custody over their children after their husbands' death. In 1975 Mahnaz Afkhami became the first minister responsible for women's affairs. The new amendments also permitted women to be lawyers and judges (ibid: 31). By 1979, 22 members of parliament were women, 33% of university students were female, with 2 million in the workforce. 190,000 women were professionals with university degrees and there were 333 women in local councils (ibid: 34).

All in all, these amendments largely supported middle-class women. They also affected the self-perception of women, especially in their employment and the labour market. Step by step, women entered into the public sectors; the increased number of educated women entering universities promoted their active presence in the public domain. In order to facilitate women's employment, child day-care centres and paid maternity leave were provided (Beck & Neshat: 117-121). Although the new amendments reformed some family laws and labour legislation, in other respects they also ceded power to institutional male control and gender discrimination, for example in addressing adultery, legislation failed to alter adultery (Sedghi, 2007: 151):

As will be discussed with regards to the post-revolutionary era, the cancelation of the Family Protection Law and the aftermath amendments in 1979 resulted in major problems for the government and gradually, over ten years, the system had to restore these amendments (Paidar, 1995: 294).

Literature 1941-1978

The abdication of the Shah in 1941 and the subjugation of the country by the Allied forces could be explained as a breaking point from the censored literature that dominated during Reza Shah's reign. Although the country was experiencing a chaotic period under the occupation of foreign forces, people and writers were pleased to find a moment of freedom against the Shah's autocratic power and censorship. Many writers celebrated this freedom in their work. For example, Nima Youshij in his poem *In the Cold Winter Night* (1950) cannot hide his joy and celebrates the moment of this freedom; he argues that no lamp is as luminous as his and it cannot be stopped by the cold moon. Although the poet is aware of the occupied neighbours, he has lit his lamp:

And no lamp is luminous as mine

Neither it freezes by the cold moon that shines above.

I lit my lamp when my neighbor was walking in a dark night [.]

(Translated by M. Alexandrian)

During the second Pahlavi's reign, many political prisoners were freed and the political atmosphere of the country began to relax. Writers found their voices and previously repressed newspapers and organisations began their activities once again. During the years 1941-1953 a diversity of opinions started to flourish in many fields, which resulted in the formation of different political and intellectual associations. Many devoted writers of this period considered joining political parties to advocate and

promote liberty. Even Sadegh Hedayat felt the need to leave his secluded shelter, and although there is uncertainty over whether he joined any of these parties, he showed his sympathetic feelings to them, especially to the Tudeh Party (Axworthy, 2013: 42).

Moreover, during these twelve years, anti-dictatorship sentiment flourished. In the meantime, writers and intellectuals such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Simin Behbahani were tempted by Soviet socialist language and reflected in their works the workers as powerful symbols for political and social change. Al-e Ahmad in *Gharbzadegi* (*Westoxication*, 1962) correlates consumerism and women's emancipation to what he understands as the impact of subversive, colonial, Western ideology on Iranian society. Behbahani's examples of social issues were included in her collections such as *Seh-tar-e Shekasteh* (*The Broken Lute*, 1951), *Ja-ye Pa* (*Footprint*, 1954), *Chelcheragh* (*Chandelier*, 1955). Behbahani's poetry of this period attempted to give voice to the socially excluded, such as peasants and prisoners.

Literary works by both men and women of this period were created within the context of a leftist oppositional literary setting. Different forms of socialist concepts and Marxist literary criticism inspired the authors' oppositional works, and were represented in committed literature (*adabiyat-e moti-ahid*). Committed literary works addressed and questioned social inequality and political repression. Committed writers recorded the issues of their society and encouraged their audience to be involved in the reform movement (Ghanoonparvar, 1964: 12).

In other words, the literary works of this period, before the 1979 revolution, are distinguished by socialist realism. Committed authors did not pay that much attention to the form of their works. Instead, they put the stress on the content of their works, maintaining that realism spoke to social, political and historical realities (Talattof, 1997: 534). They encouraged their readers to see economic or social issues, and to find the effects of these issues in their characters. The committed writers, who were influenced by Marxist literary criticism, shifted their emphasis from the aesthetic function of the device to its use in the service of a social demand²¹ (Eagleton, 1976: 20).

The committed writers also used figurative literary forms such as similes, metaphors and symbols to express the thoughts that they were forbidden to insert directly. Talattof argues that "these coded signs used metaphors such as night, cold, and darkness and silence to refer to the dictatorial condition, and spring, light, and sunshine

²¹ More information on Marxist literary criticism can be found in Terry Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, 1976, page 20.

to refer to revolution and freedom” (Talattof, 1997: 534). By 1979 the literary work of women was a central element of committed literature and they created their work in response to the social realities of their society.

Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967), poet and film director, could be considered a good example of the voice of women during this period. Her work is a representation of the realities of the time and can be studied in two distinct groups. Her primary works, *Asir (Captive)*, *Divar (The Wall)* and *Esyān (Rebellion)*, written between 1955 and 1957, include metaphors and images of love, passion and pain. But her last collections, *Tavalodi Digar (Another Birth, 1964)* and *Iman Biyavarim Be Aghaz-e Fasl-e Sard (Let Us Believe in the Beginning of a Cold Season, 1959-1967)*, embody pain, inequality, and social and cultural realities (Talattof, 1997: 534). Farrokhzad’s five collections demonstrate a movement from her personal experience to the context of a larger social struggle. Forough’s poetry will be discussed in later chapters.

Conclusion

Writing poetry after the abdication of the Shah in 1941 could be explained as a breaking point from the censored literature that dominated during Reza Shah’s reign. Many writers celebrated this freedom, which lasted for almost twelve years. The six-point program of the White Revolution, announced on 9 January 1963, comprised land redistribution and women’s suffrage. Although these amendments were opposed by the religious authorities and initiated demonstrations in different cities, women went on strike in support of them. As a result, women’s votes counted in a referendum on the White Revolution and women’s suffrage was officially approved. In 1967 the Family Protection Law was passed by parliament, providing several measures supporting women’s rights in marriage, divorce, employment and child custody. The law facilitated women’s presence in different fields of society and many women, including writers, joined active political parties such as the Tudeh Party, in an attempt to change their conditions and support liberty. Different forms of socialist concepts and Marxist literary criticism inspired the authors’ oppositional works. Committed literature (*adabiyat-e moti-ahead*) appeared and became dominant in later literary works. The poetry of committed literature is mainly related to the social, political and cultural realities of the society at the time. Although the earlier poets divulge their feminine sensibilities or personal experiences in their early poems, their later poems comply with committed literary notions, and gender issues become secondary dynamics in the poets’ work.

Even if their works were engaged with women's issues, arguably they were produced in socially conscious perspectives within traditional realism. However, these women's works were marginalised by male-dominated works of literature.

In the next chapter, it will be examined how the work of post-revolutionary Iranian women writers frequently displays more sensitivity regarding women's issues as well as gender relations. I will explore how the committed writers faced difficulties and how they were often silent or had to hide their voices from the authorities to assure their publications, and prevent attacks from the authorities. The emergence of literature concerning the Cultural Revolution (*Engelab-e Farhangi*) in 1985 restrained the literary work of the pre-revolutionary committed writers and created a new episode in literary writing, with the application of distinct religious themes.

Chapter Three: The Post-Revolutionary Women's Movement and Literature (1979-2016)

Introduction

This chapter will explore the social and political concerns affecting women's rights and literature which developed after the 1979 revolution. The chapter will be split into two distinct sections: first, the post-revolutionary historical background to women's movements, with an insight into women's literary discourse during the Revolution; and second, the women's movement and women's literary discourse from Reform to Rouhani's presidency. Each part will illustrate women's activities, particularly their literary production, and their rights in the social and political context of Iran, as well as the state's role in responding to and engaging with women's issues.

The themes, characters and dominant discussions in the literary works of Iranian women writers after the Revolution are connected to a subversive discourse within the central patriarchal power structure. Their works frequently display more sensitivity regarding women's issues and gender relations in comparison with other historical periods. The themes covered in this period by women writers challenge gender hierarchies, and explore women's experience and suffering within the social context. The themes are often expressed in metaphorical language and the women writers often share their personal experiences. Talattof, as a secular writer and reader, explains that the plots and storylines created by these women writers convey a voice of opposition pitted against "sexual oppression and reflect their struggle for identity" (Talattof, 1997: 531). This can be compared to the pre-revolutionary period of literature that was created by women whose works did not provoke such an open feminist literary movement, but rather gave voice to certain socio-political issues regarding gender relations (ibid). Primarily, these women's works were rather marginalised by male-dominated works of literature and were relatively powerless. The Revolution itself was responsible for a major movement in women's writing. The emergence of literature concerning the Islamic revolution (*Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Farhangi*) restrained the literary works of pre-revolutionary committed writers and created a new episode in literary writing with the application of distinctly religious themes. However, during the 1990s, with the start of Khatami's presidency, a new phase of writing developed. The new state reduced its controls and restrictions on writers' works and provided a moderately unguarded setting

for writers to enjoy more diversity in discourse. The change was most noticeable in women's writing, where it allowed for the growth of a feminist literary movement. The focus of this chapter is on post-revolutionary discourse, namely women's issues and gender relations. In order to demonstrate this shift in post-revolutionary discourse, two post-revolutionary eras in women's literary discourse will be explored:

1. The post-revolutionary Islamic²² literature
2. The developing inclination towards a feminist consciousness in women's writing

In each era, the themes, forms and types of characters that shaped women's literature after the Revolution will be explored. In addition, selected poems from different poets will serve as the primary sources for this chapter to indicate the themes within each era.

The Revolution and the Women's Movement

Iranian women had achieved rights to equal employment in many areas of the public sector before the 1979 revolution. More free interaction with the opposite sex was openly available in the public sphere, although there were women who were restricted by their religious families from certain interactions in public. In spite of this comparative freedom that was given to the people, the Shah's policies were considered to be corrupt and affiliated with Westernised models by the revolutionaries. The modernisation of Iran during the Shah's regime began with the arrival of skilled and knowledgeable people from the USA and Europe. Many people in Iran opposed this new elite group and considered these modernisations inspired by the West to be unconstructive and negative. Paidar, an Iranian writer and campaigner, argues that the Shah's regime failed as it "followed an autocratic and Western-oriented modernisation approach, which was heavily supported by the United States and other Western countries" (Paidar, 2001: 2). Women's involvement in the 1979 revolution was perceived as their reaction against the modernisation ideology. Such women wished for a more reforms of existing gender divisions. Women's role in the protests was mainly either to be the supporters or organisers of the movement, not leaders. Sometimes women comprised a third of the protesters (Abrahamian, 1979: 15). They were active in peaceful demonstrations, while others participated in more violent group protests (ibid).

²² The term "Islamic" here should not be understood as referring to nationality, faith and politics; nor to a set of specific characteristics of a literary movement or genre. Nor does it refer to the literature composed in Persian language. Islamic literature in this period contains a wide variety of all these. And yet, in spite of this heterogeneity of works and ideas, of authors, this literature presents us with the revolutionary political unity that supports the ideology of the state.

Some women, including members of the WOI (Women's Organisation Institution), joined in strikes, while others participated in guerrilla attacks against the state (Sansarian, 1982: 117). Vakili reports that "women were often seen leading the protests as a means of preventing government violence" (Vakili, 2011: 53). For example, in August 1978, six women were found responsible for disrupting the activities of Tehran Bazaar and many women lost their lives in street clashes amid the "Black Friday" events (ibid). Parallel to women's activities during the constitutional revolution, women were the social backbone of ordinary life. Ayatollah Khomeini realised the influence of women's presence and "insisted on the legitimacy and even necessity of women's political mobilisation" (Keddie, 2003: 408).

Khomeini promised women respect and value in a new state that would honour the "virtues" of women. However, the inauguration of the Islamic Republic initiated a sequence of laws and rules restricting women. Controlling women's appearance and behaviour became symbols of order in society. Paidar argues that women were referred to as the national identity of revolutionary Iran, and women's appearance and behaviour needed to be Islamicised (Paidar, 2001: 3). The restriction of polygamy, the rise in the legal marriage age and women's right to divorce, which were all achieved by FPA (The Family Protection Act) in 1967, were withdrawn. Women were forbidden to be judges, the age of marriage was decreased to 13 and Islamic inheritance laws were applied to women (Moghissi, 1999: 100). Criminal laws did not accord the same rights to women as men; for example in the Islamic penal code, sections 209, 213 and 300 declare that the compensation paid for a woman's accidental death is half that paid for a man. The reason for this is argued that the damage caused to the family by a man's death is a greater financial loss. However, these rules are not applicable to women who work and earn equally with men. Sections 74, 75 and 137 state that a woman's testimony in court is not considered equal to a man's testimony. There are other laws which are discriminatory, such as women requiring their husband's permission to leave the country (valla, 2003), and women's prohibition from working environments by their husbands.

Every individual woman was required to become a symbol of the Islamic regime, demonstrating Islamic teachings; thus political Islam was far more discriminatory against women. In particular, the Islamic veil presented the Islamic revolution's public face. Ali Shariati interpreted the hijab in a positive way, which shifted the hijab from being a symbol of tradition into one of revolution (1994: 261-283). He classified two types of veiling, and also made two distinct divisions: the women who choose to or

choose not to wear the hijab (Afshar, 1998: 197). First there is the traditional hijab, embraced by women who yield to religious tradition. Shariati argued that this kind of hijab has no merit, as women didn't choose it deliberately; they were not conscious, they wear it because they imitated their mothers, and they are possibly going to stop wearing it as soon as they learn new styles. But the second hijab is displayed by women who are making a deliberate choice and recovering their identity and belief. These women have more political awareness (Cited in Afshar, 1998: 197). Shariati's definition was used to the advantage of the regime, and women who oppose this rule are considered to be enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The regime's view was that Iranian 'Muslim Women' are expected to identify and assume their duties as mothers and married women.

In other words, religion was a personal issue before the Islamic regime took over. After the Revolution, the state's policies were ruled by Sharia laws and "it was no longer enough to believe; one has to wear one's beliefs in the form of hejab" (Mir-Hosseini, 2005: 1). Ayatollah Khomeini represented women as being the nation's emblems. A woman's private or public life was now controlled by the regime's Sharia laws. The women's rights movements in Iran had no exact pattern; its main act was to protest the fact that the regime imposed the hijab on women. Ayatollah Khomeini's announcement on International Women's Day on the 8th of March 1979 was the trigger that mobilised women activists. Khomeini's speech obliged women to go to work wearing the hijab; this possibly triggered the protests, providing a reason for women's demonstrations on March 8 1979, when thousands gathered at Tehran University (Tabari, 1986: 344). Women believed they were being oppressed by these Sharia laws and they considered the laws to be challenging their freedom. The Organisation of Iranian Women, Women Population of Iran, the women's branch of the National Democratic Front, the National Front and the Association of Women Lawyers were amongst the most active. Only the Association of Women Lawyers still continues its activities today and it has raised a powerful voice in support of women's rights. Azam Taleghani spoke for the Women's Society of Islamic Revolution and sent letters to Ayatollah Khomeini concerning the obligatory hijab. Rajai, the Prime Minister, introduced the Law of Compulsory Hijab to parliament in the summer of 1980.

During the period of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) women's activities and their struggle for equal rights were downgraded. The activists believed that the politicians and the clerics used the war as an excuse to set aside women's issues in the social domain.

Due to the participation of men in the front line of the war, opportunities were provided for elite women in different sectors of the public domain. Moghadam argues that “these jobs went to ideologically correct women, but their presence suggested both the determination of women and the flexibility of the Islamic Regime” (Moghadam, 2002: 1139). Some women even supported the regime during the war and were trained for military action. However, the war weakened the economic status of Iran, incomes decreased and unemployment grew. Price states that the regime was in deep debt and in addition the birth rate increased at an alarming rate (Price, 2000). Anything related to the West was considered morally opposed to the values of the Revolution, for example as modern contraceptives emerged, these were considered by the Islamic regime to be Western methods of controlling the population of Muslims (ibid). However, a population of 50 million was the regime’s central consideration and laws were rewritten. The National Family Program was dismantled soon after the 1979 revolution because it was viewed as a Western innovation. After ten years, high fertility and rapid population growth were regarded as obstacles to the regime’s security and economic development, so Iran started one of the most successful family planning programs in the world (ibid).

At this point the age of marriage was lowered to nine and contraception was accepted by moderate religious leaders. “The announcement, justified in theological terms, paved the way for the reformulation of population policies over the next few years” (Hoodafar, 1994: 11-17). Hoodafar continues that many children lost their fathers and many women became widows during the war, but afterwards women didn’t ignore or forget the active roles that they had practiced during the war. Women participated in many reconstruction projects after the war and many women were looking for jobs to assist their vulnerable families (ibid).

The Post-Revolutionary Islamic Literature

After the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini’s doctrine of governance by jurisprudence was applied to the state. This theory was totally different from modern Islam in that its goal was to rationalise religious views in order to harmonise Islam with modernity. The shift from secularisation to Islamisation also generated considerable shifts in all other elements of social life. The new state criticised and condemned Western culture, instituted the Islamic Jurisprudence laws, introduced censorship, forbade the consumption of alcohol, banned music and finally imposed the veil as mandatory for women. The new Islamic authorities realised the need to organise and advance the

revolution, so that they could then remove the leftists and secularists. Oppositional forces such as the Mojahedins, the communist unions, the Fadyis and many other sectors expressed their opposition in the streets. The Islamic regime restrained their voices and their claims to power, and closed down all the universities for a period of time to prevent intellectuals from contributing to any activities. The authorities confronted leftist and secular writers, many of whom lost their lives, were detained, banished or forced to end their activities. The remaining leftists and secularists, who saved themselves from the attacks, recognised that their objectives would not be achieved by the new revolution in which they once had placed their hopes. These writers, who considered themselves responsible for the committed literature,²³ started to pose questions about the new regime's intentions. These writers had no interest in creating another uprising movement; to them, removing the new regime from power seemed like an impossible mission. Therefore cultural concerns became the centre of attention for these committed writers. The writers were faced with difficult problems and they realised that their earlier style of writing was not sufficient to portray the new issues of society. The figurative language of the past did not fit into these new circumstances. The Persian narrative in poetry in particular was faced with upheavals (*Donyay-e Sokhan*, 1992: 16-33).

A number of secular writers reflected the outcomes of the Revolution and its impact on their personal lives within their writings for a decade after the Revolution. Male authors such as Abdollahi wrote fiction which exposed themes such as the lives of the religious minority (Nasiri, 1994: 24-29). Ali Khodai, Abass Marufi and Reza Farrokhfal's writings highlighted the psychological and emotional elements of living under the new circumstances. For example, "Ah, Istanbul" is a short story encapsulating the depression of writers in the 1980s. Other writers also reflected similar themes and indicated the unstable and insecure conditions for intellectuals. Examples can be observed in *Sher be Daghigeh Aknun (Poetry of the Moment)* by Shams Langroodi²⁴ (1988):

Give me back my dreams

²³ During the Pahlavi period it was argued that Committed writers felt the responsibility to show the problems of the society and even offered solutions to change it or at least to let some light in on the existing painful and distressing conditions. It was this feeling of responsibility that started the new episode of literary commitment (*ta'ahod-e adabi*) in the creative writing in Iran of the 1950s.

²⁴ Langroodi (1950-) is a contemporary Iranian poet, author and university lecturer. He has researched extensively on different periods of Persian poetry, most famous of which has resulted in *An Analytic History of Persian Modern Poetry* in four volumes.

My paper
 My pen.
 Give me back the freshness of my fingers
 and tell me one thing
 what direction
 I should write my name.

(Translated by Ahmad Pouri, 1990)

In the discourse of the committed writers²⁵, it is expressed that political repression will end with the rise of the majorities. The pen and the poet's ability to write symbolise this process. Langroodi illustrates the rise and fall of his dreams and his pen is of no help to write down his dreams in these new conditions. He is in search of a new direction. The committed writers were also faced with difficulties from the press and the publishing industry. In addition, they suffered from a lack of paper and other utensils. They were often silent and had to hide their voices from the authorities to ensure the publication of their work and avoid being attacked by the authorities. In *Censorship* by Hakkak it is reported that: "in the 1980s the state's policy toward the press and publishing industry has reflected both the fundamental fear of secular ideologies and a deep desire to push the intellectual community into greater conformity" (Karimi-Hakkak, 1992: 135-142). The restriction and desire of the committed writers in the re-evaluation of literature and Iranian culture paved the way for the creation of new literary figures, symbols and metaphors. This led to the production of rather inconsistent literary works.

However, the uncertainty and fluctuation in the works of committed authors allowed Islamic authors to increase in number. These writers endorsed the regime's policies and developed a new literary episode in the 1980s. A few of the Islamic authors were active before the Revolution, but the success of the Revolution increased their activities in the 1980s. State-supported Islamic literature motivated the Islamic authors; some of these writers had more fundamental beliefs than others. The Islamic authors supported the regime by providing Islamic ideologies in literary forms. In return the regime acknowledged their literary works and considered them important tools for advancing and enhancing religious ideology. The Islamic regime permitted a public space to introduce the writings of these authors and also distributed their works in

²⁵ Committed writers feel a responsibility to show the problems of their society, and even offer solutions, or at least offer reconciliation, in their discourse, to the existing painful and distressing conditions. It was this feeling of responsibility that started a new period of literary commitment (*ta'ahod-e adabi*) in creative writing in Iran in the 1950s (Talattof, 2000: 186).

religious places, mosques, schools and universities. This Islamic literary discourse was supported and sponsored by the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, which offered relative autonomy and minimal censorship to the Islamic writers. They also provided them with abundant supplies and facilities. The Islamic writers' literature sponsored the regime and the state sponsored their Islamic discourse. Both the Islamic authors and the Islamic state contradicted the secular groups. This mutual understanding between the Islamic state and the Islamic writers resulted in the publication of a significant amount of literary discourse, including both fiction and poetry. Hence the emergence of the Literature of Islamic Revolution (*Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Eslami*) and the Resistance Literature (*Adabiyat-e Paydari*). The content of this newly-born literature was concerned with interpreting the events of the Revolution, the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, and other religious subjects. These Islamic writers depicted the authorities as God's trustworthy agents within Islamic society (Talattof, 2000: 112).

Some of the Islamic poetry writers of this period are Musavi Garmarudi (1941-), Teymur Gorgin (1934-), Fatemeh Rakei (1954-) and Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008). The works of these poets borrowed themes, metaphors, form and content from the committed literature, but with Islamic interpretations. Borrowing the committed literature's figurative language prepared the state to undermine the principles and historical impact of the committed literature. As a result, the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council or SCRC took the Islamic writers' work under its control in 1985 by closing the universities, reforming the curriculum and encouraging the Islamisation of the academic environment. Jalal Rafi in *Tarha va Mosavabate-e Farhangi (Cultural Projects and Bylaws)* mentions the council's regulations for outstanding cultural and literary works:

1. Creating, translating and collecting remarkable work on Islamic traditions and art.
2. Creating an organisation for supporting Islamic traditions and art.
3. Recognition of the regime's cultural policy by combining forces with the art and cultural foundations.
4. Establishing Iranian Islamic art and traditions on an international level. (Rafi, 1994: 16-19)

The Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance offered literary awards on the Islamic revolution's anniversary. Mirmodarres, a Muslim journalist and writer, states that the most significant characteristic of Islamic art is its purpose, which should always

be to deliver a spiritual message. According to Mirmodarres, the history of art should be able to show that religiosity has formed the intrinsic notion of devotion in artistic pieces. His advice was to stop thinking that art must always convey individual expression. Art can become an eternal work only when there is a religious message to deliver. When the message becomes materialistic, its quality becomes poor. Thus, a spiritual work is one that conveys a spiritual message. The message can be direct, as in drawings about the events of *Ashura* (Imam Hossein's martyrdom), or it can be an indirect message, as in movies where the (pro-Iran) themes relate to the Iran-Iraq war. Mirmodarres also recommended that artists observe Islamic requirements in their works, such as, for example, the wearing of the veil for female actors. He stresses that if anyone does not respect religious requirements, it proves their ignorance of the rules (Cited in Talattof, 1997). It can be understood from Mirmodarres's writings that there is a distinguishable difference between the committed literature of the past and the post-revolutionary committed literature, which is based on the complete devotion of its writers to the state's Islamic cultural rules. The other difference is their perception of history. In Islamic literature, history should be read only through Islamic texts, whereas in the pre-Revolutionary committed literature history should be analysed through historical materialism.

One of the themes that Islamic writers exhibited in their writings is *Karbala*. This theme, unlike the previous committed literature, achieved a new position in state-supported Islamic literature after the Revolution. *Karbala* in Islamic discourse resembles a holy place where Imam Hossein, the third Imam for Shia followers, was martyred. These writers put stress on its holiness in their writings by illustrating the location's capability for miracles. In pre-Revolutionary committed literature the concept of *Karbala* was used to set an example of the sacrifice of an oppressed group for their claims of an ideal society. In Islamic literature the concept was used instead to achieve devotion and reliability of the society to the Islamic state as well as to facilitate the war against Iraq and restrain perceived Western control. To become a martyr during the war against Iraq was defined as a means of entering Paradise.

Other themes that were depicted within Islamic writers' discourse included the events of the Islamic Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and the state's confrontation with civil disobedience. Amongst these themes, the theme of war was most popular, particularly near the end of the war. The writers illustrated soldiers' experiences of war. For example, Mostafa Rahmandoust (1950-), a male poet, author, teacher and translator

of children's and young adults' literature, had an active presence in most movements in relation to the development of study and consciousness of the children of Iran. The theme of *Karbala* and its events is illustrated in some of the poems in his collection *Gole Labkhand va Salam (The Flower of Smile and Salam)*, published in 2000. In one poem the story of Abbas is portrayed using painful words of regret. The poem, which is about faith and loyalty, carries some of the themes simultaneously. The significance of *Karbala* in his poems differs from pre-Revolutionary works. Dolatabadi, for instance, satirised the scenes of *Karbala* so he could propose powerful writing to his readership, encouraging them to struggle against social norms. Conversely, Rahmandoust appeals openly to the loyalty of Abbas to Imam Hossein in *Karbala*, enabling readers to explore the themes of sacrifice and loyalty. The aim is for readers to find change in their lives and become devoted believers. The use of Arabic words is also visible in the poem, which is different to previous works that used to mock Arabic terminology (particularly during the constitutional period). The poem does not search for resolution in social change, but rather for devotion to support religion and for a faithful personal union with the tragedy of *Karbala*.

Another main theme that Islamic poetry was to address is the Iran-Iraq war. War poetry portrayed the Islamic warrior experiencing fights, or admired warriors as martyrs. Mourning poetry or threnody became a common genre for many poets. The poets had abundant cases available from the war to write about. Shahrokhi and Kashani (1980), Islamic literary critics, refer to the importance of this genre and struggle to endorse it. For them threnody is the natural expression of a human's grief and suffering. Shahrokhi and Kashani's collection of war poetry portrays the feelings of the poets' toward the war and its impact on the lives of the survivors.

For the Islamic poets, the Iran-Iraq war symbolised the persistence of Imam Hossein's fight against unfair leaders. Hasan Hosseini in his collection *Al-Abbas Peace be Upon Him* (2001) portrays an image of a warrior who is saying farewell to his mother as he justifies his departure to the battle. He pronounces to his mother that his wish is to join the race of tulips and to answer Imam Hossein's call for support in *Karbala* and *Ashura*. The tulip is the symbol of becoming a martyr and the warrior's wish is to join the martyrdom: "I'm leaving my mother; *Karbala* is calling for me". The poet here correlates the Iran-Iraq war with Imam Hossein's battle in *Karbala*. The message of Imam Hossein echoes not only in the fields of *Karbala* but also in the poet's text. Imam Hossein's call on the day of *Ashura*, "Is there a helper who would help me?", was not

just for the day of *Ashura*, according to the poet, but also a call for all future warriors. The poet's use of Arabic text again illustrates the worth of Islamic values for Islamic poets. The poet illustrates that as long as there is oppression and injustice in this world, the mission of Imam Hossein will be alive.

Fatemeh Rakei (1954-), a female member of the Cultural Caucus and Women's Affair of Parliament is another literary activist who also promoted the Islamic literature of the Revolution with the publication of poems about the war, Revolution and devotion to the leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, in her collection, *Safar-e Sukhtan (Burning Journey)* (1990). In this collection she introduces the heroes of the war and Islam, explaining the devastation after the war. She also intended to introduce the distinguished traits of the Muslim woman. Two poems from her collection, "For Fatemeh (A.S.)" and "For Imam Khomeini, the Leader of Islamic Revolution" show her adherence to Fatemeh, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad, and Ayatollah Khomeini. In "For Imam Khomeini" the poet praises Khomeini's leadership as the main reason for the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. She praises Khomeini's apparent ethical virtues and his wisdom: "In this manner that entirely has robbed the wit of the lovers". She symbolises his face with "the running stream of light" or the sunset, "the rose of the sun", and presents his spirituality and holiness. She offers his voice as a sweet melody. Fatemeh symbolises his voice as "the whisper of a stream". She suggests in the fourth line that she is not able to describe him since he is "as an aspiration" and "an imagination". She also finishes her poem with the similar suggestion: "It looks like an imagination, a dream".

Sepideh Kashani (1936-1992) is another female poet of the Islamic Revolution who is referred to as "The Mother of Islamic revolutionary Poetry". Kashani's poetry is more expressive. A collection of her poems was published in 1994 under the title *The Friend's Speech*. Her poems before the Revolution focused on social themes, and were published in the collection *Nocturnal Butterflies* in 1973. With the establishment of the Council of Poetry by the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, Kashani accepted membership in the Council, as well as being an active member of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Broadcasting Service. As a result, many of her poems were broadcast in the form of revolutionary songs. The themes in her poems included the war, martyrs and warriors, Shia Imams, Ayatollah Khomeini, and mothers. She writes in the form of elegy, modern Persian poetry and couplets. In the following poem Kashani portrays a mother's feelings and the pains of the war that took the lives of her children. She blames

the war and the enemy for the destruction of her land. This poem, "*Bahar Ast-o Hengam-e Chidan-e Man*" ("It's Spring and the Time for My Harvesting") (1979) has been broadcast many times over radio and television in Iran. In the first line of this poem she expresses her straightforward feelings toward the enemy:

It's Spring and the Time for My Harvesting
O foe! If you smear my earth with my blood
From every corner of my rose bower, a rose will sprout out
O foe! If you separate my head from my body
How can you ever remove from my heart
My love of my homeland?! (Translated by: Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2014)

In pre-Revolutionary committed literature, writers believed that they were the ones who should start the political movement so that the masses would follow them. Similarly, in post-revolutionary Islamic literature the poet is seen as a Shia warrior, whose emotions, such as crying, persuade the masses to respond. In pre-revolutionary committed literature, the themes centred around freedom, justice and changes aimed at motivating the readership. In post-revolutionary Islamic literature, a warrior has only to restate his devotion and belief to engage the readership. Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008) is an Islamic female poet who has similar goals in her poetry. She asks people to follow the Islamic teachings. Saffarzadeh devoted herself to Islamic norms, even before the success of the Revolution, and she is considered one of the first devoted and faithful poets of Islamic Revolution literature. Her works became increasingly recognised after the Revolution.

Some changes began to develop in the 1990s within Islamic writing, as the state reduced its censorship and provided a relatively open environment for writers to enjoy the diversity of reforming ideas during Khatami's presidency. The change was most pronounced in women's writing, and allowed for the growth of a feminist literary movement to some extent. An example can be observed in the *Zanan* (women) Journal (1991-2008). The journal started its activity with a true commitment to the state's policy and theories, but its publication was later stopped by the state just because the journal reflected women's issues in ways of which the state disapproved. The journal was renamed to *Zanan-e Emrooz* (Today's Women) but it had published a special report on white marriage (unmarried cohabitation) in Iran in its October 2014 issue and the journal was suspended for the second time (e.g. books by Virginia Woolf, Marguerite Duras, Dan Brown and Woody Allen).

Iranian Women's Movements from the Reform to Rouhani

The status of the 'reformist' movement (*Eslahtalaban*) in Iran was improved with Mohammad Khatami's presidential election in May 1997, which saw the mass involvement of women and the younger generation in the elections (Paidar, 2001). The reformist movement was piloted by moderate Islamic principles. During the first period (four years) of Khatami's presidency, women's individual organisations were instituted in most governmental departments and administrative organisations. Khatami employed ideas around women's freedom in his campaign as a tool to gain power. In one of his campaigns he declared: "the Islamic system and community should confidently appoint women to sensitive posts [...] Limitations should not come in the way of broad participation by women in management, politics and society" (ibid: 11). Although women's interest in politics increased during Khatami's presidency period, the posts held by women were mainly associated with the state's scheme. Fazaeli names these women as Islamic state-feminists. She argues that:

Their [the Islamic state-feminists'] ideal woman is the veiled woman of the revolution liberated from the chattels of consumerism and capitalism of the West, the mother, wife, sister or child of a martyr who lives her life according to the Islamic creed, using Fatimeh [the Prophet Mohammad's daughter] as her role model. They added that they perceived women's rights as complementary to men's rather than equal. (Fazaeli, 2007: 31)

Furthermore, the term 'Muslim feminism'²⁶ is used by some feminists in Iran who recognise themselves as Islamic feminists, but they want to separate themselves from the former group. Muslim feminists condemn Islamic feminists for not seeking amendments and improvements outside the context of Islam. Therefore, they regard themselves as a new class of feminists placed between Islamic and secular feminists. Fazaeli defined Muslim feminism as following:

Both Islamic and Muslim feminists seek to reform Islamic law using *ijtihad*. However, Islamic feminist's use of dynamic *ijtihad* as a tool for reform is confined to the framework of traditional Islamic *fiqh*, whereas Muslim feminists look for answers outside this framework. They acquire most of their responses from philosophy and *Ahl Kalam*. *Ahl Kalam* believe that before entering into the debate of dynamic *ijtihad* where time and context are

²⁶ A list of some figures in Iran's Islamic and Muslim feminist movement includes Jamileh Kadivar, journalist Parvin Ardalan, human rights activist Mehrangiz Kar, Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, founder of Zanan magazine Shahla Sherkat, Nayereh Tohidi, Afsaneh Najmabadi, Haleh Afshar, Valentine Moghadam and Ziba Mir-Hosseini. A selection of quotes from these women indicates that they differentiate Islam as a religion from interpretation of Sharia Law and regulations.

crucial, one has to take into account some principle rules such as justice and equality, both of which are the essence of Qur'an. (ibid)

Muslim feminism was born in Iran. From their view it can be understood that Muslim feminism is a world between the fundamentalist and Western feminism. The confrontation of the "Islamic state-feminist" members of the parliament and the Muslim feminist members as well as the traditional clerical establishment became most visible in political terms in the case of Iran's joining to the UN Convention, CEDAW. However, the women elected to the sixth parliament after the Revolution did make some progress concerning the rights of Iranian women. Existing laws were modified to upgrade the rights concerning women, and parliament passed a bill in favour of joining CEDAW, the United Nations Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. But two conditions to CEDAW were considered by parliament: first that any specification against Islam should not be legitimate, and second that any conflict or disagreement via the International Court of Justice in Hague would not be tolerated in Iran. The Guardian council (*Shoraye Negahban*) vetoed CEDAW on 12 August 2003. The convention was considered to be against Sharia laws and Iranian culture. Fazaeli identifies three main approaches to CEDAW in Iran:

First, there are the conformists who vehemently oppose Iran's accession to CEDAW and regard it as an imposition of Western Cultures and values. Second, there are the religious modern thinkers who, allied with the reformists, believe that Islam and human rights are generally compatible, but that some provisions of CEDAW may be regarded as unIslamic, and are therefore met by reservation with integrity. Third, there are the women's rights activists and feminists who see CEDAW as a powerful advocacy and lobbying tool that Iran should ratify without any reservations. (Fazaeli, 2016: 131)

However, following the 2009 Iranian presidential elections the debate on ratification of CEDAW weakened but the Coalition of the Iranian Women's Movement for Voicing Their Demands in the Election was formed before the elections and they asked for reconsideration and re-joining of the CEDAW (Fazaeli, 2016: 140). Activists such as Nooshin Ahmadi, Shahla Sherkar and Parvin Ardalan informs on the limits of cultural relativism as it is currently argued in the West. Afary argues that: [these activists] are calling for adherence to set of strategic universals to be reached through dialogue and consensus among women of the East and the West (Afary and Anderson, 2010: 176).

The reform period paved the way for the emergence of a new political environment and the importance of civil society, which flourished after the elections in

1997. Although the Islamic regime constantly showed its opposition toward educated, secular women, there was a considerable growth of women who could be considered a powerful political force in Iran after the Revolution. The women's movement and the birth of 'Islamic Feminism' is one contradictory result of political Islam. This movement did not just form after the election of Khatami, but had been emerging since the time of the Revolution. Mir-Hosseini points out that political Islam "helped to create a space, an arena, within which Muslim women can reconcile their faith and identity with their struggle for gender equality" (Mir-Hosseini, 2005). This space made it possible for a large number of women to see that there is no reason to link patriarchy with Islamic values, and that in fact Islam and feminism are not contradictory.

Khatami's presidency also made possible a less restricted press. Many books and articles concerning feminist matters were published. Faezeh Hashemi Rafsanjani initiated the Asian games for Muslim women in 1993. She was elected to parliament in the fifth parliament with a large number of votes from Tehran. Muslim feminism had arrived in Iran.

The presence of Iranian women in public space increased. Iranian students engaged in many activities in support of Khatami's reforming movement. However, the movement was not completely successful and there were impediments to achieving its goals, simply because most of the government was controlled by the strong forces of hardliners. Most publications supporting the reforming movements were closed down, including *Zan* (Iran's first women's daily), journalists were imprisoned, lawyers were persecuted, and many reformists surrounded by or outside the state lost their positions and jobs. Women's movements from the constitutional revolution to the 1979 revolution often claimed the street as a space to make their voices heard. However, in recent decades this has changed and they use the possibilities offered by virtual spaces, such as social networks like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Telegram, as well as blogs. This virtual space, mainly for the younger generation, is a place to escape the control and censorship of the state. In "Social Media In Iran", Faris and Rahimi argue that: "The Internet, social networking sites, and blogs have provided the much-needed space for interaction and free exchange of ideas, strategies for action, campaigns, and nonviolent civil resistance" (Faris and Rahimi, 2015: 45). Amir-Ebrahimi also argues that the Internet has offered a voice to people who have no access to traditional political access-points, as well as politicians whose voice is banned (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2005). Examples of this could be found in the Green movement in 2009,

where groups were formed on Facebook and videos were uploaded to YouTube to broadcast information and organise street demonstrations in opposition to the state's policies. Another example is the Laleh Mothers' Movement and their website, Mournfulmothers, which tells of their murdered children and asks for justice. The website is directed by Iranian feminist movements and is linked to websites such as the Feminist School (*Madrash-ye Feministi*). In recent years, a Facebook network, My Stealthy Freedom (*Azadiha-ye Yavashaki*), has become very popular among Iranian women, who share "stealthily" taken photos of themselves without veils to oppose the imposing veiling laws. Using the digital world has become very popular for women's movements in Iran, especially since journals such as *Zan* (woman) in 1999, *Zanan* (women) in 2008 and *IrandoKht* (Iranian girl) in 2009 were censored by the state. Despite many regulations imposed by the state in their control of the Internet such as speed and surfing limits, it is not impossible to break this control, by using proxy servers from third parties (for example), to go against the will of the state (Bakhtavar, 2010: 206). These new regulations angered many users, including MPs, and they asked for clear reasons for them (Khiabany, 2010: 73).

Parvin Ardalan²⁷, who established the web site "Change for Equality" in 2006, stated that: "We use social media as a news tool" (Afary, 2009). In the process of elimination of reformist organisations after Khatami's presidency, Internet became a dynamic platform of propagating information for many reformist and feminist activists (Lichter and Nouraie, 2009: 139). In 2001 women's blogs, websites (such as womeniniran.net) and online campaigns initiated their activities. Discussions of gender increased in cyberspace. For example, Parvin Ardalan, a journalist, launched Iran's premier online women's magazine, Zanestan and organised meetings throughout the country (Lichter, 2009: 151). In 2007, she was awarded the Olof Palme Prize for courage in Stockholm, Sweden (Sayyati, 2007). Iranian youth found a momentum in cyberspace to express themselves more freely and alleviate their despair in a much safer medium. In other words, "Cyberspace has been a liberating territory — A place to resist a traditionally imposed identity..." (Nouraie-Simone, 2005: 62-80). Despite the growing female bloggers and websites in number, the state initiated to eliminate their

²⁷ Parvin Ardalan, also the editor of another online women's magazine, called *Tribun-e feminist-e Iran*, (The Iranian Feminist Tribune). In 2003 Nushin Ahmadi Khorassani and Ardalan published a biography of Mehranghiz Manucherian, the Iranian Parliament's first woman senator, elected during the Pahlavi regime (Afary, 2009).

activities by formulating new Internet policies controlling the expansion of weblogs and websites. As a result, the Cyber Crime Bill, providing guidelines and penalties under the guise of “safeguarding individual rights as well as Islamic, national, and cultural values” delivered by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 2006 (Khiabany, 2010: 5, 76).

Mehrangiz Kar is disappointed by this reaction of the state and she believes this is another challenge to “stop the trend towards liberalization and to curtail the freedoms gained during the reform era” (Cited in Nouraie-simone, 2005: 219). On the contrary, Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani has optimistic view and she believes that: “We are linked together indirectly through theoretical and practical work. We work systematically, therefore, we operate like a chain” (ibid). Today, although some networking sites such as Facebook or YouTube are very limited in terms of access by Iranian users, they can still share their thoughts, opinions and resistance via other available platforms, such as Instagram and Telegram.

On March 8 2003, International Women’s Day, women protested for the first time since 1980 against compulsory veiling, gathering in Tehran’s Laleh Park. Also in that year the first online conference of Iranian feminists was formed around the globe, critical of the gendered stereotypes of the “good” mother, “good” daughter, and the “good” wife. Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian women’s rights and human rights activist, as well as a lawyer, won the Nobel Peace Prize. She was welcomed by a large crowd of people at Tehran’s Mehrabad Airport. However the Iranian conservative press criticised Ebadi for not covering her hair and one journalist named her “Sharon Ebadi”, blaming the Nobel Academy for awarding the Peace Prize under pressure from the United States and Zionist circles. Ebadi has stated in interviews and press conferences that she has always obeyed the laws concerning women’s veiling in Iran, but outside the country she is not forced to and not required to obey the rules. Four days after the return of Ebadi, Khatami was questioned for not showing his response to the award; he replied: “Must I always send a message for everything, the Nobel Peace Prize is not very important, the ones that count are the scientific and literary prizes”. Shortly after, it looked like Khatami was attempting to moderate the conservatives’ anger against Ebadi. In an interview with the *Iran Press Service* on December 12, 2003, Khatami stated:

The Nobel Prize is very important in all domains; it is obvious that every Iranian must be proud to know that another Iranian, especially an Iranian woman, got this Prize. This said, more important than the prize of the peace is peace itself. Our world is a

world of war, a world of terror and violence, a world of illness and famine, a world of discrimination. (*Iran Press*, 2003: Dec 12)

Khatami made this remarkable comment in an interview issued by the influential French daily *Le Monde* dated 13 December, and added that Mrs. Ebadi had the right to not wear the veil outside Iran (2003).

In September 2004 the *Jumhuriy-e Eslami* (Islamic Republic) newspaper issued an article condemning NGOs (non-governmental organisations) as the driving force of Western influence, and many reformist journalists were arrested. The reformist movement collapsed with the succession of right-wing conservatives to the seventh parliament in February 2004. Resistance to women's movements began during this period, starting with the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in June 2005. In the 2005 presidential election, Ahmadinejad promised women via state-run television that Islamic dress codes are not his primary concern, in comparison with the economic and social issues that exist in Iran. He repeated that veiling is not his concern. However, after gaining power he formed the "Islamic guidance police force" (*Polis-e Nirouy-e Eslami-ye Ershad*) to control women's dress across the country. On June 18 2010, during a Friday prayer speech, Janati criticised Ahmadinejad's views on veiling and criticised Ahmadinejad for interfering in the affairs of the security forces. He indicated that if the government is unable to control the veiling violations on the streets, the government should begin challenging veiling first in government offices.

Activists began a campaign against the new prejudiced and discriminatory principles against women, taking their voices to the streets on June 12 2005. Many activists were arrested in these demonstrations. The following year a group of activists gathered in Haft-e Tir Square to repeat their requests; the police reacted very harshly. Many leading activists, such as Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani, Parvin Ardalan, Sussan Tahmasbi and Jelveh Javahereh, participated in the protest. They initiated the One Million Signatures Campaign. The intention of the campaign was to collect one million signatures in order to amend discriminatory laws. The tactic increased pressure on the state from the women's movement. Some activists were arrested, while others had their daily lives observed closely by the state.

Thirty-three women activists demonstrated in front of Tehran's Revolutionary Court in March 2007 to oppose the trials of their collaborators who had been detained in the Haft-e Tir demonstration attacks. They were arrested and confined at Evin prison. Most of the women were later released. However, the leaders, for example Shadi Sadr

and Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh (the active member and initiator of the Stop Stoning to Death campaign) were kept for one month in Evin prison. These women were arrested again in the following year during the 2009 elections, without cause. In April 2008 the morality police strengthened their pressure on women who dress improperly and against the rules. Some shops and restaurants were closed down for allowing women with “inappropriate hijab” to enter their premises. The government advised clothing retailers not to sell tight and short dresses; otherwise their goods would be captured and held by the government.

Hila Sedighi (1985) a reformist female poet of this period has written “Autumn’s Rain” for oppressed students of Iran (Story of my missing classmate). Her poem “It’s Green Again” is read for the 27th anniversary of Meena’s assassination. Her poetry is best known for her politically charged lyrics recited during the aftermath of highly contested 2009 presidential election in Iran. She began writing poetry at a young age and was elected as the youngest chief editor for ‘City of Children’ magazine at age fourteen.

A month before the 2009 elections, the movement joined forces with activists of different ideological backgrounds (e.g. the Green movement), from the religious to the secular realms, to ask for their rights from the future government: first, they demanded that the government join CEDAW, and second that it modify the constitution to institute official equality for women. In support of their requests, the activists issued leaflets, put up posters and wrote articles on their websites. These women played important roles in the election demonstrations. These demonstrations were followed by a wave of mass arrests and some women were charged with *Mohareba* (enmity to God) because of their participation in the December 2009 Ashura demonstrations.

Since the 2009 presidential election the women’s movement has concentrated on the status of female political prisoners and the state’s downward pressure on women’s rights. They have strengthened their activities both in Iran and internationally. However, most of the organisations in Iran continue their activities in secret. They share information through different networks and social media, mostly through their self-directed websites, Facebook pages and blogs. Some activists, after leaving the country, have continued their activities in international human rights organisations or have established their own institutes. For example, Shirin Ebadi, while residing outside Iran, still concentrates on issues of human rights. Abbasgholizadeh believes that the women’s movement has not been influenced by any political movement within Iran, although the

state has always condemned the West's interference in Iranian women's movements. She argues that the women's movement has never been politicised by the Green movement or even by international activists (The Iran Primer, 2011).

On June 7 2011 the government introduced an International Muslim Women's Parliament. The parliament's major objectives were to confront feminism and Talibanism. Their other objective was to weaken the media war against "Western-oriented" feminist organisations in Iran.

After the protests of 2009, generated by claims of vote rigging in Ahmadinejad's re-election, universities in Iran were faced with very central changes. This is because Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leader, decided that student movements were the main power behind the protests. In July 2011, FARS NEWS announced that forty departments would accept only one gender of students in the coming academic year. Despite the President's objection, gender segregation in universities seems to be taken very seriously. Ahmadinejad called the decision "superficial and unwise" on 6 July 2011. Senior clergymen such as Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi (a source of emulation) criticised Ahmadinejad for his opposition to gender segregation in universities and forced early retirement for lecturers. He argued that the decision would improve the status of veiling in universities. The new censorship began when Ahmadinejad took office. The cultural ministry imposed rules requiring renewed permits for previously published books. As a result, many books have been deemed unsuitable for publication or reprinting.

Women's rights in Iran have frequently been sacrificed for the sake of the maintenance of existing patriarchal power structures. The future of the women's movement in Iran depends on the link between active members inside Iran and those who have left the country (in the diaspora). As Shirin Ebadi (2010) has argued, the regime's attacks will only make the activists stronger; the women's movement could reach its aims if different branches of women activists gathered their forces and became unified. A good example of this could be Zahra Rahnava, the wife of a presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi in the last election, in 2009. She was able to bridge the gap between women activists from different backgrounds. She criticised the state's policies and supported a reform ideology, while being recognised as a conservative and anti-feminist at the same time. However, she has been held under house arrest since February of 2011.

During the last year of Ahmadinejad's presidency, the government restricted the budget for family planning and several universities decided to ban female students from a number of fields of study. Although the number of female students decreased, the government was not successful in completing this plan.

The role of women in public life has become more evident during Hassan Rouhani's presidency, but not yet enough compared to the previous government. Although he promised women high governmental positions in his campaign in 2013, later he was faced with a conservative majority in parliament who were opposed to that decision. Despite these difficulties, four women were chosen as vice-presidents, together with Shahindokht Molaverdi as vice-president for women and family affairs, and Masoumeh Ebtekar as the head of the Environmental Protection Organisation. However, arguably, the 2016 parliamentary elections paved the way for a more reformist and gender-friendly mainstream. Moreover, women were given more freedom to wear more challenging and colourful outfits, and make-up. From 2014 many female designers and fashion companies became more active, particularly on social media sites such as Instagram, and private fashion shows became more popular. These designers invited popular female actors to advertise their trends. Rouhani encouraged the police to implement the law rather than magnifying Islamic values. However, the laws that are enforced by the "Cultural Revolution" (*Enghelabe Farhangi*) regrettably still challenge and restrict women in Iran.

The Inclination to Feminist Consciousness in Women's Poetry

The restriction of women's rights in 1979 and in particular the compulsory Islamic dress codes provided new viewpoints for women's literary discourse and, subsequently, their active and conscious presence in Iran's contemporary literature. Mehrangiz Rassapour, poet, literary critic and editor of *VAJEH* (a cultural and literary magazine) was born in Khoram-abad, south-west Iran. Her books of poetry are entitled *Jeregheh Zood Mimirad* (*Spark Dies at Once*, Iran, 1992), *...And then the Sun* (...*Va Sepass Aftaab*, England, 2000), and *Beyond The Flight Of The Bird* (*Parandeh Digar, Nah*, Germany, 2012). The poems from her last collection, including "Stoning" and "Lash", have been published in several languages, including English (by the poet and translator Robert Chandler), French, German, Norwegian and others. Her poem "Stoning" lists some of the enforced laws against women after the Revolution. The Stop Stoning Forever Campaign was formed by various women's rights activists in Iran after a man and a

woman were stoned to death in Mashhad in May 2006. The campaign's main goal was to legally abolish stoning as a form of punishment for adultery in Iran. In the poem, the poet by repeating "Stone me" highlights the brutality of the law in the period. She condemns the rules and the state itself. In the last lines of the poem, she calls out the state directly: "You! Who were not born of a mother!" She symbolises the state as a creature other than human, who has no heart and was not born of a mother. The poet lists her pains and the forbidden rules that surround her. Her crimes include showing her hair, kissing, seeing, mobility and being in the public domain, being in love with a man, drinking, and, apparently the worst, being a woman. However, she celebrates being a woman who is able to see, to be visible and to have a voice. She lets the tyrants stone her, but reminds them that she has a brain and she is fully aware of how to make her voice heard using her words. The poem has a very creative form. The poet locates the phrase "Stone me" in each line at different places to illustrate the action of stoning. The last three lines of the poem portray the persona's weak and injured body from stoning; she cannot finish the phrase in each line: "Stone... / Stone... / Stone...".

Sholeh Wolpé (1962-), a poet and literary translator, has also portrayed the rules of oppression imposed by the state in her poem "It's a man's world to the end of the end". She states that her main sin and crime is to be "a woman simply." She writes:

It's a man's world to the end of the end
 I am a woman. Simply.
 To look at me is a sin –
 I must be veiled.
 To hear my voice is a temptation
 that must be hushed.
 For me to think is a crime
 so I must not be schooled.
 I am to bear it all
 and die quietly, without complaint.
 Only then can I be admitted to the court of God
 where I must repose naked on a marble cloud
 feed virtuous men succulent grapes
 pour them wine from golden vats
 and murmur songs of love...

(Kalbasi, 2009:1)

Compulsory veiling triggered prompt anger in many women who were against the rule, and who attacked the rule as a violation of their rights. On March 10 1979 women marched in the streets of many major cities to protest the ruling. This can be called the first independent women's movement after the Revolution. These women were carrying slogans such as "For freedom, we'll fight. We'll fight", "We fight against the hijab", "Women must be freed from captivity" and "Mandatory veiling is the death shroud of our freedom".

Women began their struggle over compulsory veiling by publishing their critiques in editorial columns in the form of interviews, discussions, articles, and reports in journals such as *Haftah Nameheye Susiyalistie Kargar* (socialist workers' weekly) (1983) and *Fasli Dar Gol'e Sorkh* (a season of roses) (1980). A growing group of feminist writers condemned the silence of men when women's rights were marginalised; they also criticised the men and the leftist groups who had actively approved the new restrictions against women.

Azam Taleghani, editor of *Payam-e Hajar* Weekly, publishes articles concerning women's rights from a religious point of view. She believes that because of the widespread feminist activity including publication, the divorce rate in Iran has increased. According to Kian, *Payam-e Hajar* is the first Islamic magazine which advocated for the necessity of reinterpretation of Shariat Laws (Kian, 1997: 81). Anitta Kynsilehto states that: "Scholars challenging patriarchal reading of the Qur'an and the Hadith have demonstrated in their work how it is not the texts themselves but rather their interpretations that have allowed for patriarchal traditions to persist (Kynsilehto, 2008: 9).

Talattof argues that, today, "it is common for interviewers to ask an Iranian woman writer whether she is a feminist. Although such questions were previously unheard of, there are now numerous publications engaged in debates over feminism and women's issues" (Talattof, 2000: 139). Literature became women's central medium of self-expression and an important means for them to illustrate their suppressed voices.

During this period, women who were active in the fields of fiction and poetry also showed a great inclination towards feminism. They published an extensive number of papers in national journals or at conferences, and wrote books, poems and many other works that show their concern for women's issues. There were also publications by men who wrote about women's issues in Iran, and also the women writers in the diaspora. Women writers within Iran still face difficulties in publishing their work, first

because of the male-dominated nature of the publishing industry in Iran and, second, because of their fear of being hunted and criminalised by the regime. Shahrnush Parsipur, for instance, was persecuted for publishing the book *Zanan-e- Bedun-e Mardan* (*Women Without Men*, 1990), while Tahmineh Milani was confined by the Revolutionary Court on August 27, 2001, and taken into prison for several days for her film *Nimeh-e Pinhan* (*The Hidden Half*). Her house was searched and items were removed. Milani said: “Let Simone de Beauvoir come and live for a year the life I live here [in Iran] if she can still produce one line of writing I’ll change my name” (Milani, 1983: 155).

Iranian women writers’ motivation to overcome these difficulties has rewarded them with large audiences of ‘other’ women. Many critics, such as Imami, agree that many women who might also not have much access or freedom to be outside their homes, spend a lot of time reading books, poems, novels, fiction and many other types of literature (Imami, 1992: 70). This fits in with literature, especially poetry, being the culture of the private and the domestic, thus being available to women whose space was restricted. The evidence for the amount of readership and recognition of women writers can be represented by the number of reprinted works. Milani reports that “By the mid-1990s [...] women dominated the fiction best-seller lists. The number of women novelists now is 370- thirteen times as many as ten years earlier and about equal to the number of men novelists” (Milani, 2011: 185). Novels by women in Iran after the Revolution now frequently sell more than novels by men.

The themes and stories of these novels involve embracing the interests of female audiences, with respect to women’s issues and all aspects of their lives. Themes such as family, gender relations, domestic violence, depression and mental illness, oppression or tyranny from older brothers or fathers and husbands, drugs, child custody, sexual relationships, poverty, the right to choose their husbands or partners, marriage traditions, and finally their craving to obtain freedom are all covered. Talattof discloses that:

Their [female writers’] new literary discourse provides them with more space to talk about deep-rooted sexual norms such as virginity and to disclose the related physical abuse and violence toward women. Their female protagonists tend to emphasise the political nature of the self, care about their historical sisters, promote womanhood, and express awareness of the political issues surrounding the female body and sexuality. (Talattof, 1997: 543-544)

A huge popular movement has developed in women's writing, with regards to literary form, style, characterisation, theme and figurative language. These women use new arrangements of feminist metaphors in their literary discourse, distinguishing them from the themes that liberal writers used before the Revolution and from male writers after the Revolution. Feminist expressions such as "freedom of choice", "promoting equality with men", "interaction between man and woman", "struggle against patriarchy", and criticism for considering women as sex objects have increased in women's literary writings. This can be perceived in Simin Behbahani's poetry, which is focused more on feminist themes when compared to her poems before the Revolution. A selection of her poems will be analysed in the next chapter.

Among the post-revolutionary writers, the presence of a younger generation of women writers and poets is noticeable. They enrolled in this movement of established writers to represent, analytically, the traditional, male dominant characteristics of Iranian culture. For example, one theme for women writers is women's economic dependence on men to survive and obtain their living. Mansurrah Sharifzadeh's short stories offer good examples of women's financial dependency. She portrays men who take advantage of the situation and exploit women as sex objects.

The most popular theme in women's post-revolutionary literature is the veil. The veil has attained a substantial symbolic role in women's writing; it has turned out to be a characteristic feature of progression for some women and a step backward for others; its meaning is an implication of what Sharia laws and the post-revolutionary regime has meant for Iran. Some women in Iran perceive the compulsory veil as symbol of disgrace and repression, while others perceive it as a way to integrate into and enter the public domain. Compulsory veiling has bestowed veiled writers like Zahra Rahnava authority and power. She argues that both men and women are required to comply with modest dress and behaviour rules. On the other hand, Sousan Azadi has a critical approach. In her writing Azadi describes the veil as a prison that women carry with themselves (Milani, 1997: 44).

Among Iranian women writers, poets play very significant roles in portraying women's sorrow and the distress caused by a patriarchal society, as well as themes of resistance and rebelliousness. They broke the silence with their poetic rhythms and their versifying of the grief of women. Their thematic choice illustrate the interests of female poets in dealing with the conditions of their current period and also their condemnation of the state's policies against their rights. They indicate the grief and disappointment of

women, created by their oppression, struggle and disobedience. Rosa Jamali (1977) is an Iranian poet and playwright; her poetical language is rough and violent, she writes of her society's forbidden laws and restrictions:

I don't know if it's Saturday or Friday today?

It's morning or night

Today is forbidden

Tomorrow is forbidden

Clapping is forbidden

Always is forbidden[.]

(Translated by Pegah Ahmadi, 2005)

In today's Iranian poetry the reader is a witness of violence, discontent and rage. Screams, grief and sorrows that time after time have hurt women are reflected in these poems. Women bravely continue their writing regardless of the censorship, controls and restrictions applied to their poems. Pegah Ahmadi (1974) portrays this censorship in her poem "A circle has swallowed my voice". Her earlier works were mixed with linguistic experimentation, as was the case with many Iranian poets in the 1990s. But then she took up political and social themes because she considered them to be more relevant. She has mainly considered issues of history and the changing role of women in society, reflecting also what consequences these changes have had for women writers. In "A circle has swallowed my voice" she portrays the captivity of her voice in her community. The shapes she describes for her city refer metaphorically to the signs in the street. A triangle and circle in her poem are the signs of a warning of particular hazards, obstacle or conditions that makes her fearful and terrified. The poet illustrates the status of the freedom of speech in her city and the fear that her words might be recorded by anyone in this city: "Doubt and distrust / And fear of not knowing which friend / Has a hidden recorder in her pocket".

Conclusion

This examination of Islamic literature that supported the state ideology after the Revolution indicates that the writers in this period largely endorsed their religion and also the state's policy within their literary works. Their view of the events of the Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and pre-revolutionary history is very religious. By applying religious themes in their work, they advertised religiosity; they were trying to get closer to the concepts of the divine. State-supported Islamic literature also borrowed

some of its themes, such as fighting against Western ideologies, justice, freedom and devotion, from the pre-revolutionary committed literature. Islamic writers called to their community for loyalty, devotion and faithfulness to their religious ideologies, fighting against their opponents such as Iraq and the West. They inserted religious themes such as *Karbala* and *Ashura* into their poems when illustrating the war between Iraq and Iran. For the Muslim poets, the Iran-Iraq war was the persistence of Imam Hossein's fight against unfair rulers.

The veil became a symbol of the Islamic government's gender policy. Frustrated by these laws and the pressure from legal restrictions, especially regarding veiling, women were determined to focus on writing about women's issues. Women writers explicitly criticised the regime's course of action regarding women's issues. This began with protests and resistance to compulsory veiling, insisting on their rights, and continued in confrontations with the authorities in their writings, the press and in social activities. Other elements also helped the growth of women writers: increases in women's literacy and entry into higher education took place over the period. This also increased the number of audiences and readers who were well aware of the conditions of their own lives as well as those of their mothers and female friends. This resulted in the reprinting of women's writings. In their literary works, women broke the silence and made their voices heard. Although they had to observe the veiling rules within the streets and their public lives, they could unveil themselves in their writing. Women writers explored feminist discourses. They unveiled sexual repression and exposed the male-dominated social structures existing within Iran; they started to deal directly with gender relations. These authors formed their own metaphorical language, themes and symbols in new ways to confront the patriarchal committed literature and increase their organised presence. Their writings created clear and noticeable new meaning by means of character, symbol, metaphor, irony and many other literary devices.

Analysis of the poems reveals some of the new imagery, themes, genres and structures that the women's movement used. The poems portray how women expressed sexual desire in terms of notions of visibility and invisibility (veiling), how they modified male mythologies from a female point of view, and how they built up spirituality and freedom through their writing. It also shows how they revised the traditional committed pre-revolutionary literature. During the three decades after the revolution, women poets experienced a shift in their discourse, from traditional Islamic

themes as mothers, wives, guardians of the revolution, warriors and martyrs, to more feminist themes. These women poets expressed themselves thus:

1. As critics of social issues
2. By using an active voice
3. By employing feminine and erotic language in their poetry without shame
4. By portraying power, agency and subjectivity through their poetry
5. By having the courage to describe issues that were forbidden for women in Iran.

The rise of the female voice and feminist consciousness emerged through the presence of many young poets who grew up after the Revolution and openly critiqued gender relations in their society. Due to persistent problems with censorship, their sphere of activity is now concentrated more in virtual spaces such as blogs, Facebook pages, and later Instagram and Telegram, which have helped them to overcome censorship. The digital realm has been a powerful enabler of feminist discourse in contemporary Iran in this respect. Although there are many female poets in this period to cover, the poetry of Tahereh Saffarzadeh, Simin Behbahani and Granaz Moussavi will be analysed in detail in chapter 6.

Chapter Four: Irigarayan Theory and Practice in the Constitutional Poetry of Zhale Gaem-Maghamsi and Parvin Etesami

Introduction

Since the early twentieth century in Iran, when the constitutional movement (1906) began challenging the absolutist power of the century-old Qajar dynasty, the discourse of women's rights began to mobilise in both law and literature as a mechanism for building a modern nation-state. As has been discussed, although the pace of progress was very slow, women took advantage of new magazines and journals to initiate debate over women's issues and to transgress political boundaries imposed upon public discussions of these issues. After the constitutional revolution, women's legal rights remained unchanged, but their persuasive presence in the political movements of the time turned into a platform for their subsequent movements, particularly in expanding their education and literature. Many activist organisations, such as Women's Awakening, addressed the importance of women's education. They developed their own societies, published their own magazines and got involved in enlightening women by providing education and establishing schools for girls, such as *Dabestan-e Doushizegan*. In addition, female poets expressed their life experiences and their condition in society. They illustrated and detailed women's social and political issues for the first time in their poems.

This chapter will show how Iranian female poets during the constitutional period began to propose a new image of Iranian women that was contrary to classical literature. More explicitly, how their poetic voice was assertive in resistance to a male-dominated society. Irigaray's deconstructive method will be used as a means to explore the ways in which women delivered a subversive discourse of gender relations in Iran. In this chapter I will analyse the first phase of this discourse, which is self-awareness and the education of women. After discussing the connection between Irigaray's work and Iranian women's poetry, the representation of women and their gender identity in Persian traditional literature will be elaborated upon. This will help in understanding why the search for recognition and self-awareness in women's poetry in the constitutional period depended mainly upon the poets' consideration of the concept of *Sharm* (self-erasure).

Constitutional literature covers the literary works from the late nineteenth century to 1922 and, as discussed previously, the literary work of this period was

produced with the intention of reforming the social and political issues of the country. It was argued that during the pre-constitutional period the three phases of the awakening of Iranian women had an influential role in women's writing and publication. Women's poetry relied mostly upon classical poetic conventions (known as a return to the traditions of the classical masters) and they were reluctant to express their own voice. With the development of reforms writers began to criticise the ruling authorities and poets began focusing the themes and content of their poems on the homeland (*Vatan*) rather than an imaginary beloved. The poetry in this period began to be reformed in many ways, including in language, themes, poetic diction and form, but the didactic and moralistic tone of the past persisted. The main thematic choices for the poetry of this period were: admiration for democracy, criticism of the authorities, justification of 'human rights', anti-religious and anti-imperialist themes, a refusal to wear the veil, and a stress on women's education. Finally, in the period after constitutional revolution, young poets such as Parvin Etesami, who grew up during the course of the revolution and were aware of Western literature, began to place stress on poetic form and aesthetic structure rather than the content of the poem. They broke with traditional poetry and began to write in free verse, which liberated them from prosodic measures.

In the constitutional period the study identified that most of the influential poetry by women was composed during the militant and post-revolutionary stages of the constitutional period. In this chapter, therefore, my analysis of dominant notions of sexuality will be performed by examining a selection of women's poetry from these times. I will mainly be analysing the poems of Alam-Taj Ghaem Maghami (1883-1947), who used the pen name Zhale, and Parvin Etesami (1907-1941). The choice of their poems relates, in the first instance, to thematic concerns around gender issues. The feminine and the subjectivity of women form important features of the narrative in both of their work. Moreover, the development of this cultural phenomenon, the encounter with the masculine cultural tradition in Iranian women's contemporary poetry, can be introduced via their poetry. Janet Afary believes that Zhale's poetry is the first female-centred collection in Persian literary history and Forough Farrokhzad continued her style of articulation to deconstruct the patriarchal order in the 1960s (Afary, 2009: 229).

A survey of Zhale's and Etesami's poetry can offer us an inclusive insight into the layers of meaning within women's poetry in Iran. It can demonstrate in particular their success and progress over the dominant presence of the masculine cultural tradition in Persian classical literature.

Zhale and Parvin's Historical, Social, Cultural and Literary Outline of Time

Previous chapters have offered a detailed historical outline of the constitutional period and women's literature. The following is a brief sketch of the period while situating the selected poets' (Zhale and Parvin's) lives and literary/linguistic outline within it.

Iran was in the grips of the most unstable and decisive period in its history during the lives of these two poets. It was left with a financial crisis after Naser al-Din Shah's (1848-1896) visits to Europe and his wish to modernise Iranian society. Mozaffar ad-Din Shah (1896-1907), the next king, followed the same path and failed to put an end to the country's financial problems. The aftermath of these failures resulted in Russia and Britain extending their power in the country, which loosened the Shah's control over the state. The Shah had to sell concessions to obtain loans from foreign companies, for example the tobacco concession sold to the Talbot Company, which caused disquiet among Iranian intellectuals. Poets such as Zhale point to these events in their poetry. Zhale condemns her fellow countrymen, including her husband, for their reactions against the foreign policies and for making the country unsafe and weak. For example, in the poem "Dialogues with a Singer Sewing Machine" Zhale refers to the Caucasian territories which were stripped from Iran by the treaties of Golestan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828). She reminds her countrymen of their great Persian history: "Why do you shame your poor ancestors? / With your weak character you imitate religious leaders: / it's effort without yield and training without a point. / You easily yield control of the Caucasus" (Seyed-Gohrab, 2014: 95).

At the end of the nineteenth century demand for political and economic reforms increased. Nasir al-Din Shah was assassinated and his successor Mohammad Ali Shah led the country for another two years until he was dethroned for not being loyal to the constitutional regulations. Ahmed Shah, the next king in power, was also removed from power, by a military coup in 1921. Reza Khan took power in 1925 and the Pahlavi dynasty began its rule. Parvin Etesami grew up during the political and economic upheavals between 1907 and 1941. She was twenty-three years younger than Zhale and had begun to write poems since the age of seven. The Shah's ruthless and forceful tactics had their impact on writers and poets' thematic choices. Most writers initially chose depoliticised themes and concentrated on subjects such as history, patriotism, moral rhetoric and Western epics, or simply supporting the Shah's reforms through, for example, reflecting on the importance of women's education. Those who resisted were

silenced forever or threatened with death. This could be counted as another important reason for Parvin's choice to use a vague language, especially in subjects related to the position of women.

In constitutional women's poetry, in the first phase of women's work after 1906, poets such as Zhale were critical about the reduction of woman to the 'other' of man. They characterised the issue in terms of Irigaray's concept of "free[ing] the two from the one" (Irigaray, 2000: 129-139), particularly through their emphasis on women's education. In the second phase (during the Pahlavi era), poets attempt to cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously shift to "the reality of two" more openly. Finally, in the third phase of their work, mostly written in diaspora after 1979, which focuses on the manner in which the female subject relates to her other, the poets shifted to concentrating on the elements required to share the culture of two and cultivate hospitality between the two. This pattern is similar to Irigaray's philosophy, which shifts the stress on to the need to replace the duality of subjects with unity in sexual difference.

Writing, for Irigaray, means seeking not to conquer, but "to give, to transmit, to restore" (Irigaray, 2004: 30). In order to emphasise the significance of the creative production of literature and its analytical assessment, Irigaray states that "words and gestures need to be invented – saying the divine that compels man to pursue his becoming" (Irigaray, 2012: 65). For Iranian women poets, this new language of the feminine needed to be discovered in order to appropriate their own becoming.

In my Introduction, discussion of Irigaray's notion of the ethical approach towards subjectivity and the sensible transcendental (space between two) began with a discussion of sexual difference, which prepared the basic frame for conceptualising the term. The applicability of Irigaray's notions of the transcendental to the re-imagined literary language in Persian women's poetry will be considered in this chapter. I will explain how Irigaray's interpretation of sexual desire and difference could offer a more detailed picture of the evocation of women's pleasure in Iranian women's poetic language. From this, considering the constitutional period's women's movement and literature, it will be demonstrated how this new feminine language could have the potential to identify the phallogocentric concepts and hegemonies of the time, and moreover to challenge these hegemonies.

Irigaray's transcendental theories of the duality of subjectivity, the masculine and feminine, and the culture of dialogic exchange between different subjects, can

considerably enhance our reading of the cultural meanings of Iranian women's poetry, particularly the metaphors and arguments that the poets produced to cultivate a feminine culture in their poetry collections. My analysis will explore how Iranian women poets transform the poetic line to represent certain female experiences in their culture. This will be examined via Irigarayan modes of resistance. Irigaray's resistant praxis, introduced in the Introduction, will be applied to oppose the masculine authority over language and reverse the negative image of women. Finally, it will be demonstrated how strategies used by these Iranian women poets are comparable to those used by Irigaray and, more significantly, how Iranian women poets' style in the constitutional period forms a parallel relation with the first phase of Irigaray's work: to criticise the "auto-mono-centrism" of the traditional subject in Persian poetry. For the purpose of this chapter, five or six poems from both Alam-Taj Ghaem Maghami and Parvin Etesami will be considered.

Alam-Taj Ghaem Maghami (1883-1947) used the pen name Zhale. She used poetry as a medium to express women's suffering and inequality within society, and she demanded reforms in the condition of women. She challenged women to stand up for their rights and obtain their freedom. Although she was very young in the constitutional period, her poetry plays a very distinctive role, in terms of gender perspective, in the history of women's literature in Iran. It is argued that her poetry is a representation of the feminine and not repetitive of the motifs and patterns of past literature (Farokhzad, 2001: 366). She is considered the Emily Dickinson of Persian poetry (Jahan-Tigh & Qadir, 2011: 123-139). Her poetry introduces new concepts, vocabulary and poetic diction. For example, in her poem, "Dialogues with a Singer Sewing Machine", she praised newly introduced technologies such as the gramophone, while simultaneously criticising her countrymen's pace in progression and their shallow imitation of the West (Naficy, 2011: 50). Her poems were found by her son after her death, since her husband forbade her from writing poetry. Alam-Taj's poetry is also inspired by her own life and she broke the taboo against involving the private in public expressions. For example, she recounts how her unhappy and painful marriage is a source of her grief in her life (Marohn, 2010: 148). Azar Nafisi argues that Alam-Taj "deconstructs the traditional poetic form, turning her own personal plight into a universal manifesto against the oppression of women, against the bondage of religion, the veil, and obedience to another's demand for blind obedience, be it a husband, a cleric, or a despot" (Nafisi, 2003: 986).

Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) was the most important female poet of the Reza Shah period. She displayed her opposition to the realities of her society such as poverty and orphanage in her poetry. Because of Reza Shah's repressive control over the writers' publications, she used depoliticised themes in her poetry. After her graduation in 1924 from Bethal, the American high school for girls, she started to teach in the same school and did not involve herself directly in political activities. She even refused an invitation to become the tutor of the Queen in 1926. Her poetry was similar to conventional male poets and remained unmoved by the liberal trends of the time, adhering to the style and form of the classical Persian tradition. Her earlier poetry involves the description of nature and abstract concepts, but in her later work social justice, ethics and the importance of knowledge come to be discussed. A most important theme in her later works is the dilemmas of Iranian women, specifically their absence from educational fields.

It will be discussed how these two poets uncover women's struggles, rather than being marginalised and unvoiced, as well as how they acknowledge Iranian women's issues, rather than being invisible and silent in a male-dominated structure, while conforming, to some extent, to the norms and values of their culture. First of all, however, the question of women and their subject position in traditional Persian literature must be outlined.

Gender Identity and Women as Subjects in Traditional Persian Literature

Gender identity in Iran cannot be detached from the concept of *Sharm* (self-erasure). Self-control in behaviour and appearance, and confinement of physical mobility and sexuality, are all features of the gender politics in Persian classical poems. These restrictions often function through the concept of self-erasure, or the Persian equivalent, *sharm*, which is a patriarchal measure of a woman's attraction and beauty (Milani, 1992: 52). The meaning of self-identity is measured in a different way among Muslim and Western women. They each have a different view of themselves, influenced by social factors. In contrast to Muslim societies, the concepts of individualism and self-identity are correlated to one another in the West. In other words, for a Western woman, realisation of oneself depends directly on individual self-expression, which is defined outside the contexts of socio-political hierarchies (Fernea, 1985: 301). However, an Iranian woman defined under the Islamic patterns attempts to connect with the classical pattern and the literary body as she suffers from her seclusion and elimination.

Shahidian argues that gender identity should be constructed beyond formal frameworks such as religion and culture, “to encompass the broad perspectives and paradigms that shape cultures and define priorities within which gender is constructed” (Shahidian, 2002: 8). However, during the constitutional period, Iranian women’s poetry is written exclusively in the context of “*Sharm*”. The poets do not refuse the elements of the male dominated literary system (classical poetry) in this period, but pursue recognition and connection with their literary history. Classical poems were created as love poems for and about women, who were at the centre of the poetry, there to be gazed at. In other words, these poems predominantly had a monologic voice and were produced from the perspective of the masculine lover only. However, the women poets in this period gradually attempted to remove the position of woman as beloved, and transferred this position to men to be gazed at.

Published forms of women’s poetry were almost absent before the constitutional period. The first appearance of women’s issues and consideration of their portrayal as objects was in the late nineteenth-century poems by male poets such as Iraj Mirza and Mirzade-ye Eshghi. Iraj Mirza (1874-1925), for example, conveys his thoughts on women’s veiling during his time in Iran. In his poems he relates Iranian women’s seclusion from society, the practice of veiling, their faith and cultural norms. At this period the “woman question”, especially the practice of veiling, turned into an ideological argument, in which concerns regarding the changing nature of the Iranian social order and questions of Iranian national identity were expressed. As Kandiyoti suggests, it can be argued that treatment of the “woman question” in poems of this period “served as a vocabulary to debate questions of cultural and national integrity, notions of order and disorder, and finally conceptions of the indigenous relative to the foreign” (Kandiyoti, 1988: 140).

It can be understood that the “woman question” during this period had not become an issue “for the sake of women’s rights”, but as “a space for social critique or a battlefield between social forms, such as old and new” (Durakbasa, 1998a: 139-56). Male poets or journalists of this period debated the “question of woman” purely because Iranian women’s poetry had not existed in published form before the twentieth century. This meant that, when Iranian women attempted to articulate their ideas as women, they did not have an autonomous subject position. Women’s participation in the debate was condemned to terms and contexts which were already established by the symbolic order of masculinity.

The reason behind stressing women's education in women's discourse originates from the government's plans regarding the modernisation of society. Education was used as a means to allow the Iranian nation to progress, not necessarily for the sake of enunciation of women. Women's feelings were ignored by male poets who put forward the "question of woman", and women in their poetry were not considered as people but as representational objects. For example, in Mirza's "Image of Women", although the issue of the veil is discussed throughout the entire poem, women's pain or suffering is completely removed from the text:

On the door of a traveller's inn
 A woman's face was drawn in ink
 From a reliable source of news
 The turban-wearers heard the news
 Woe to our faith, they said
 People saw a woman's face unveiled[.]
 (Translated by Milani, 1992: 30-32)

Mirza's poem shows the struggle between the clergy and the people's beliefs over female coverage. The woman's bare face is identified as a disturbance to the social order, as it attracts men and occludes her chastity. The poem identifies the physical control of women, their pain through the context of *sharm* and especially the strict cultural rules that existed for women.

Eshghi (1894-1924), another male poet of the constitutional revolution, is adamant about women's rights in Iran and has a similar attitude to Mirza. The practice of veiling in his poems represents women's oppression and exclusion. In the first lines of one poem, he goes against the practice and represents the veil as an image of social oppression:

What are these unbecoming cloaks and veils?
 They are shrouds for the dead, not for those alive
 I say: "Death to those who bury women alive"
 If a few poets add their voices to mine
 A murmur of discontent will start[.]
 (Translated by Milani, 1992: 29)

In Eshghi's poems the shroud is a symbolic image which represents his unhappy feelings toward the conquest of the Persian Empire by the Arabs. He also uses the word in his long play, *The Black Shroud* (1915), where it stands for the poet's grief over an

inspired vision he suffered after looking at the ruins of Ctesiphon, destroyed by the Arab invasion. It also refers to the mandatory head-to-toe covering of women and their restrictions in society. Women's own feelings and suffrage, in both Eshghi and Mirza's poems, are not voiced. Women's presence in their poems has a political value and their central place as a subject has been ignored; they are seen as cyphers for "more important" issues of colonisation.

Women's Search for Self-awareness and Recognition

The illiteracy rate was enormously high among both men and women in early twentieth century Iran. Boys were given the privilege over girls to be sent to schools and receive education. Girls, on the other hand, were married off in their early teens and only a few women from elite and affluent families had the chance to get educated and push the existing boundaries. Both Zhale and Parvin were among the few fortunate women of that period who got the chance to be educated. Zhale was tutored from a very young age in the traditional curriculum of her time, such as religious studies, Persian and Arabic literature, philosophy, astrology, and logic. Zhale points out her early education in a poem: "I went to school to read and write. I was / Less than five years old, no more" (Seyed-Gohrab, 2014: 3). However, Zhale's educational opportunities ended when she turned fifteen and was faced with a mandatory marriage, being the victim of her father's financial crisis. Zhale refers to the details of her marriage in many occasions through her poetry: "My marriage was a political bond, / a punishment I have from my father and mother" (ibid).

Parvin Etesami received a private education primarily from her father, Yuossof Etesami, who was a literary intellectual, and also a strong supporter of women's education and visibility in the public domain. Later, with her father's support, she published her early poems in his father's magazine *Bahar* (spring) at the age of fourteen. This was an important opportunity for Parvin that Zhale lacked. Zhale never had the chance to publish her poems, since her poetry was an expression of her hidden personal feelings that were against the social norms of the period. Zhale's poetry was discovered and published only after her death by her son, Pezhman Bakhtiyari (1900-1974) (ibid: 1). On the contrary, Parvin was among the first Muslim girls who attended and graduated in 1924 from the Iran Bethel School, an American high school for girls. Unlike Zhale, Parvin had a rather late marriage, although it was still a mandatory one.

Both poets divorced their husbands and Zhale had to suffer also the separation from her child due to the custody laws at that time.

Zhale's poetry is in contrast to Parvin's, due to the fact that her poetry is written in secret, and unlike Parvin, she was not obliged to keep to the moral standards of her society. The female voice in Parvin's poetry is not as strong as in Zhale's poems. Although some of Parvin's poems could be called a reference to discussions on the status of women, her other poems address the position of women more directly (ibid: 9). For example, "Woman in Iran" ("*Zan dar Iran*") (1935) is often discussed as a demonstration of Parvin's struggle for women's rights, while her poem "The Angel of Intimacy" ("*Fereshte-ye Ons*") (1935), engages with other features, such as motherhood and being a wife. The boat in this poem symbolises a wife and the captain is a man. She stresses that if the boat is secured and well-founded, the captain of the boat will not fear to confront the storms. Parvin elaborates in her poem that the wife's duty is not restricted to household chores. The wife in her view is also a "doctor, nurse, the police and a security guard":

If Plato and Socrates have been great men,
 their nurse in childhood must have been very great
 Many a child has slept in the cradle of the mother,
 and then became a Loghman [Persian wise man] in the school of
 philosophy [...]
 Osage, do you know what the duty of man and woman is?
 One of them is the ship, and the other the captain.
 When the captain is wise, and the ship strong,
 there is no worry about waves, storms or abysses.
 In the days of misfortune, in the sea of the world.
 (A collection of Parvin E'tessami's poems, 2002: 145)

Parvin uses cosmic images, anecdotes, parables, natural elements and the real objects of daily life in her poetry to reflect social mistreatments that could oppress a woman, a labourer, the old, poor or orphan children (Milani, 1994: 148). In addition, Parvin's style of debate empowers her to indicate broadly moral perceptions (Ghanoonparvar, 1994: 103-116). Her writing is in the context of *Sharm* (self-erasure). For example, she never reveals her feelings toward the opposite sex or describes heterosexual love. Her gender in her work is not revealed and her style of writing is free of any violence or aggressive themes.

Only after the Shah's unveiling decree in 1936 could Parvin express her feelings openly. However, still she did not reveal her feminist perspective, or demonstrate whether she was against or in favour of the veil. For Parvin, education and achieving knowledge had more value than taking away the veil by force. Milani explains that while she was "aware of gender inequities and concerned with discrimination, she [Parvin] never subordinated a woman's welfare to the symbolic significance of unveiling as a token of the modernity of the state" (Milani, 1992: 112). But in the last two lines of the poem Parvin changes her position once more: "Hearts and eyes do need a veil; the veil of chastity / a worn out Chador is not the basis of faith in Islam" (Etesami et al., 1985: 107).

On the other hand, Zhale's poems all explain her position as a woman. Seyed-gohrab describes her poetry as "a lucid expression of her personality, of her 'self'" (Seyed-Gohrab, 2014: 19). In contrast to Parvin, she did not feel obliged to conform to a modest form of writing and does not hesitate to share her intimate moments with her husband, her suffrage of polygamy, her dislike of her husband, and her sense of being treated as an object of desire (ibid). Although Zhale's poetry has modern themes and covers the contemporary subjects of her time, the form of her poetry obeys the classical Persian pattern. The content in her poetry plays a vital role compared to the form. For example, she sometimes avoids using a deliberate pattern of lines that rhyme, in an attempt to deliver more meaningful content. It was discussed in previous chapters that the modernisation schemes during Zhale's time attempted to avoid using classical forms, and used Western poetic forms instead. But many poets such as Zhale still continued using the classical patterns and rather preferred to concentrate on the content of their poetry. Of the extant lines by Zhale, 917 are written in classical forms such as *qaside* (panegyric poems) or *qet'e* (fragmentary topical poems).

Zhale's radical thinking with regards to cultural and religious norms, especially on the subjects of women, are very motivating. Although her poetry was not published in her lifetime, it is believed that her poetry can be compared to that of the skilful male poets of her time (Seyed-Gohrab, 2014: 13).

The Concept of *Sharm* (self-erasure)

To reflect on the concept of *sharm*, the two poets have different attitudes. Whereas Zhale freed her feelings in expressing her position as a woman, Parvin acts with more restraint in recognising the suffering and pain of women in her society, and uses a

cautious and concealed language, involving animal figures and associated objects such as bird cages. Abodolhosein Zarinkoob referred to her as “a female [poet] with a male trace in the poem and mysticism” (1995: 344). However, her tone changes in her last collection of poems after the Shah’s unveiling decree in 1936, in which she becomes more critical and she shows her anger directly at the absence of recognition of women’s identity and potential. In the following poem Parvin reveals her pain. She identifies herself as a woman when her potential as a female poet was questioned by some male literary authorities:

From the dust of false thought, the heart had better be cleansed
So that the demon knows this mirror is not for dust.
Some literary persons believe Parvin to be a man.
She is not a man. This riddle had better be solved.

(Translated by Milani, 1992: 106)

As Luce Irigaray argues, “the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject” (1985: 78). In giving a voice to the female (in this poem to herself), Parvin in writing similar to Irigaray’s style, does not disturb the pattern of binary thought whereby the female is defined in relation to the male, but continues to manoeuvre within the existing system.

Irigaray’s style of dialogical language is especially suitable for a reading of the poems of Zhale and Parvin. Her style has the potential for resistance to the linguistic approach of the symbolic order for women’s self-enunciation and recognition. Self-enunciation for Irigaray means criticism of the consideration of the masculine identity as an ideal subject in contrast to others. This view neglects the feminine other and does not include representation of the female subject. It is essential to question the feminine other’s subject position in order to avoid discounting women as subjects. Irigaray argues that our culture has not yet developed a dialectical relation to the self-representation of ‘I’ and the difference of two has been neglected. Self-enunciation for Irigaray is represented in three realities:

A real corresponding to the masculine subject, a real corresponding to the feminine subject, and a real corresponding to their relation. These three reals thus each corresponds to a world but these three worlds are in interaction. They never appear as proper in the sense of independent of each other. (Irigaray, 2002:111)

Irigaray attempts to reveal and restructure these realities in the symbolic order. Her proposal for women invites both a linguistic deconstruction, and the re-designation of

rights achieved in the name of equality, projecting a new ethics that would let women be present in sexual difference and would reform their objectification. In this way, women can shape the rights they have achieved in the name of equality to their own selves as women.

As already mentioned, gender identity in Iran cannot be detached from the concept of self-erasure, or *sharm*. By considering the impact of the concept of *sharm* on women's poetry in Iran, I offer an Irigarayan reading of the selected poets of the constitutional period, Zhale and Parvin. In the next section the aim is to assess women's poetic voice and show how their poems are not passive, but instead are assertive in resistance to a male-dominated society and traditional norms. It will be analysed there how Zhale and Parvin are able to create the unwelcome feminine in a way that is beneficial for women.

In my consideration of Irigaray's work in relation to the selected poetry I intend to employ the meanings developed in Irigaray's concept of the 'unified feminine subject'. Irigaray offers several approaches to opposing masculine authority over language and reversing the negative image of women. The approaches to overcoming phallic language in poetry are through mimesis or mimicry, masquerades, the recognition of the duality of subjectivities (difference between two) and self-enunciation of the feminine 'I', through cultivating female desire (*jouissance*) or illustrating female erotic associational discourse in women's writing, breaking with grammatical and lexical norms (morphology) and the need to alter and "rehabilitate" the mother-daughter relationship. These techniques will be used as tools to analyse the work of these poets, in order to excavate the way they reject the monosubjective (masculine) nature and norms of traditional Persian poetry and replace them with more self-recognition of their subject position. It will be demonstrated how the poets benefit from these techniques to define the conditions required to form a new language (voice) and a culture in the feminine.

The strategies used by Zhale and Parvin in their poetry are comparable to those used by Irigaray. The exhortation in their poems to articulate through difference and ethical approaches is something which the two poets have continued to focus on throughout their works. Irigaray utilises her critical insights to claim the need to establish a fresh and different "linguistic home". This will need an alteration in the place of the subjects of enunciation, as well as the recognition of two different dialogical subjects, and it requires fresh listening to each other. The following analysis

is an effort to illustrate that the poetry of both these eminent poets carries with itself the uniquely female voice that Irigaray has described in her critical theory. Accordingly, I focus on Zhale's and Parvin's poems through the concept of "*parler femme*", to use Irigaray's term, the discourse of femininity in a patriarchal literary world. For the purposes of this chapter, six poems by each poet will be analysed.

The selected poems from each poet can provide a great opportunity to question the beliefs surrounding gender identities in the constitutional and first Pahlavi periods of Iran. The poems provide knowledge of the intrinsic beliefs of society and how the poets attempt to dismantle them. The poems also show the reader to what extent the poets are able to use the woman's body within their poetry to identify it as pivotal to their engendered existence. In this respect these poets provide the female body the freedom to break from the norms expected of it in a patriarchal and heteronormative society. It is important to find out if these poems are able to represent the female body in its own right and not in relation to a male body, or provide a voice for women to express their thoughts independently, or finally if they are able to give women the subject position rather than having them as the object.

Zhale's poetry follows the thematic pattern of this period and most of her poems cover themes such as concern for women's position, her dramatic and unhappy relationship with her husband, women's thoughts on marriage and polygamy, women's education, the concept of motherhood, and using objects either as her companion, mementos or to make objectified correlatives of her condition and attitudes. In other words, Zhale express her character's emotions by showing rather than describing feelings directly. She creates an emotional reaction in the readers by finding a combination of images, objects, or description evoking the appropriate emotion. Her source of the emotional reaction isn't in one particular object, one particular image, or one particular word. Instead, the emotion originates in the combination of these phenomena when they appear together in her poems.

Parvin, similar to Zhale, chooses themes of social satire. However, Parvin uses more moral themes and concealed language, such as animal figures, in expressing her feelings. Her more critical themes appear in her last collections of poems such as *Zan dar Iran* (*Women in Iran*), written after the Shah's unveiling decree in 1936. Her poetic themes at the beginning are concentrated on fatalism, the importance of knowledge, poverty, orphanages and the elderly, and she does not use any personal elements in her

poetry. In her last collection, however, she is more concerned with women's education, social justice and the concept of motherhood.

Zhale's and Parvin's Personal Marriages and the Theme of the 'Husband'

Zhale had an unhappy marriage and she refers to the reasons for this several times in her poetry. Her marriage was an arranged marriage by her father, paying off his financial debts. Seyed Gohrab argues that Zhale represents her husband Ali Morad Khan as unapproachable (Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 3). Ali Morad Khan was a traditional military man who already had other wives, and could not understand Zhale's deep feelings. He restrained Zhale's freedom and Zhale was not happy about her husband's old age and inadequate education (ibid). The first year of this disappointing marriage for the poet coincided with her son's birth and the loss of her parents. These events are central to much of her poetry. Immediately after her son's birth she returned to her parental home to live with her brother. She left her husband without divorcing him, which was not common at that time for women, who had very limited rights. Moreover, she had to leave her son with his father due to custody rights being in favour of men. Pezhman (her son) reunited with Zhale only after twenty-seven years. Zhale shows her suffering and the pain of her separation from her son in several of her poems. She compares her situation to Jacob and Joseph's story in the Q'uran: "Only Jacob and no one else is aware of the suffering / I endured from the separation from my child" (ibid: 5). Pezhman also refers to his mother's unhappy marriage in a poem of his own: "My mother was not satisfied by her husband, and left to him / a boy of several months old, a shield against the sword of affliction" (ibid).

Pezhman's notes and poems about his father's relationship with his mother explain more about the absence of respect and subjection in a women's marriage life within the patriarchal society of that time. Zhale suffered from gender inequality in her marriage as well as in the traditional society in which she lived. Zhale's having no intention of making her poetry public demonstrates the poet's desperate condition and how hopeless she saw the position of women as in her society, and reinforces the idea that a woman's realm is 'private'.

After her unsuccessful marriage, Zhale committed her time to writing poetry and reading literary, philosophical and astrological books. She never remarried and died in 1945. Although some of her quatrains were published in 1933, most of her poetry was published after her death when her son discovered her poems between the pages of

books in her library. There is no time sequence in Zhale's poetry, but its themes indicate that her writing began from the time of her marriage. Zhale was not comfortable with publishing her poetry due to the social norms and definitions of *sharm* for women in her society. Seyed Gohrab argues that Zhale tried to hide the writing of her first poems so her son would never know about her talent for writing poetry (ibid: 16). In one poem she even admitted burning one *ghazal* of her poetry:

My picture is black, for I am ill-starred, but why should I care?

Let the portrait of my suffering remain in the world

I will give my own poems to the fire, deliberately,

before fire can fall into my book of poetry

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 16).

In contrast to Zhale, Parvin Etesami had a very short marriage, which lasted for only two months. She married in 1934 to a cousin of her father, the chief policeman in Kermanshah city. Six years after her divorce, she died of Typhoid fever in Tehran and was buried in Qom. Her father's death in 1938 was a sudden shock and a heavy pain to Parvin. She very much depended on her father's support. The tragedy severed Parvin's contact with the outside world. Unlike Zhale, who started writing after her marriage, Parvin wrote poems from the age of eight. However, similar to Zhale, Parvin's poetic and emotional nature was not compatible with the military temperament of her husband, and her husband's drug addiction and corruption caused her to get a divorce. Parvin only wrote three couplets about her divorce and married life. She tried to conceal her personal life experience as much as possible. In fact, her *Diwan* only includes a few poems about her own life incidents, such as a poem in mourning for her father, a piece for her own gravestone, and the poem "Twig of Wish" written for her graduation ceremony in the spring of 1924, plus a few other works. Her father decided to publish Parvin's poetry collection, *Diwan*, for the first time after her divorce in 1935. She was well known in literary meetings and some of her poems and writings had already been published in *Bahar* magazine or Dekhoda's *Amsal Hekam*, as well as in Hashtroodi's book titled *Greatest Poems*. The publication of her collection was well received among literary figures and newspapers such as *Iran*. The Ministry of Knowledge awarded her a "scientific" medal, which she refused to accept. A year after her death, a small book of essays and poems was published in the summer of 1944 in Tehran. In the following paragraphs, two poems from each poet deliberating on the theme of marriage will be examined.

Zhale, in one of her very long poems, *Reproach to My Husband*, provides her readers with a glance of her husband's physical appearance and features, introducing him as an angry and violent man. The poem also hints at the practice of imposed marriage on women:

My mate is an unusual husband,
he is not a husband, he's a flame that jumps.
He is thin, dark, tall, and hard;
in my eyes, he is like a pine-tree.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 75)

In Zhale's poem images of the woman's body in marginalised discourse and her singing (writing the poem) are performed as her resistance against the dominant discourse. On the other hand, the poet's representation of the husband as a pine tree is to stress his spiky and annoying nature. Echoing Irigaray, Zhale benefits from the technique of mimesis (mimicry) and reveals that the relationship between husband and wife must be 'rehabilitated'. The pine tree is used as a metaphor for the beloved's honest characteristics in Persian classical poetry; but here this is replaced with a negative meaning. Here the metaphor could imply the symbolic system of authorised patriarchy. In this way, the poet rejects this ironic reconciliation and changes its meaning to the man that cannot be trusted. By using this technique and deconstructing the stereotypes from within, the poet can question the existing values of the authority in classical Persian poetry. The poet, in a teasing manner, from the position appointed to her, expresses her own voice. Reading Zhale's poems in the Irigarayan style of writing can reveal the ethics of a dominant literary system that eliminates women's subjectivity (Irigaray, 1985: 76).

Zhale continues to depict more negative images of her husband in the poem to show her hatred of their intimate relationship: "His beard pricks below my ear / like a needle through the pupil of the eye. / He's around my neck like the gibbet's cord / always coiling around my neck with his hands" (translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 75). Zhale expresses the degree of pain in her marriage by using exaggerated metaphors involving tortured bodies. In later couplets, she even goes further and uses the metaphor of "the coiling of a serpent" for her husband's arms around her neck. However, she then moves from using terrifying images of her husband to her own insecure image, referring to her represented image in the society: "In his hands, my small body / is like a dove in the falcon's claws." Zhale refers to herself as a small bird in the claws of a fearful

falcon. In Persian mystical poetry, such as in Rumi's poetry, the figure of the falcon is a metaphor for the soul and the dove is a metaphor for pure and innocent love. For Zhale to disrupt the dominant masculine discourse, sexual difference must be inscribed in the language of her poem in order to realise her subjectivity. Zhale deconstructs the image of the man (her husband) as body, soul and spirit. In *Between East and West*, Irigaray discusses the separation of the body from the soul in Western culture. She writes, "The culture that we have been taught says that it is necessary to despise the body in order to be spiritual; the body would be the nature that we have to surpass in order to become spirit, in order to become soul" (Irigaray and Pluháček, 2002: 75). Zhale's separation of body from soul in the poem, similar to Irigaray's style of mimicry, operates in a hierarchical gender divide in which the woman is defined as body (the prey) and the man is defined as spirit, to place stress on women's objectification. Instead of admiring the soul, she despises the soul, the falcon. The poem also favours the literary jargon of the constitutional period, by portraying a magnificent image of Iran before Islam and before the Arab invasion. Zhale draws on her husband's intense nationalistic views, but presents him as a simple-minded and unsophisticated man:

He'll have nothing to do with poets and poetry
 except for Ferdowsi and his *Shah-name*.
 He is proud of Nader, who conquered Delhi.
 He shares the divine glory of Rostam, who broke the army's ranks.
 He is an army general, where there is no army,
 for there is neither unrest, nor any agitation.
 On the day when he holds audience, he wears his formal dress
 believing that there is kingship and leadership.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 75)

Zhale teases her husband's pride and states that he thinks he possesses the Persian heroic that existed within the *Shah-name* (the *Book of Kings*). The *Shah-name* is a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between 977 and 1010 AD, and is the national epic of Greater Iran, before Islam. Rostam is remembered as a historical figure; he is a character in the poem and is introduced as the champion of champions. Zhale, by using the masquerade technique, transforms her position from that of passive object into active subject. This tactic allows her to subvert the traditional inferiority of women who are viewed as too weak and inadequate to become heroines. In *This Sex Which is Not One* Irigaray claims that what is considered normal or standard in contemporary culture

can only be conceived from a masculine point of view (Irigaray, 1985: 134). For example, to be “desirable” by traditional standards, a woman sacrifices her desire in order to provide man his desire. This act of submission to tradition, mainly to masculine norms, is what Irigaray refers to as “the masquerade of femininity” (ibid). There is no option for this woman except to enter into this masquerade if she wants to become a conventionally desirable woman. As Irigaray states, she must enter “into a system of values that is not hers, and in which she can ‘appear’ and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely men” (ibid).

Irigaray believes that to break out from this masquerade, women must cultivate a new “syntax” that does not depend on the conventional binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, women should avoid using conventional language and traditional perceptions of identity. This escape would let them acknowledge their individual desires without being concerned with not being welcomed or desired by the culture. As Sally Robinson argues, “Masquerade, then, is a strategy for self-representation that disrupts the very thing that is apparently inscribed: the reduction of women to a normative representation of Woman” (Robinson, 1991: 121). Through the use of masquerade, Zhale demonstrates that gender norms are arbitrary and imposed to serve the dominant ideology’s aim of gender coherence. The poet’s masquerade is a way for her to protect herself in the world of men and to acknowledge her self-enunciation. Zhale has used the masquerade to empower her position and remove the conventional beliefs that women are a source of weakness and cannot achieve heroic positions. Zhale continues to express her unsatisfactory and disappointing relationship with her husband in the next lines. The poet stresses her husband’s laughter and self-centredness in response to her complaints:

For nothing, he will shout at me
as if he is the roaring thunder.
If I tell him: “oh man! I am a woman.
you should talk differently to a woman.
The peace of a woman’s gentle soul,
Is formed by a child, love and a spouse.
I am a lover of peace, not of war,
even if it is a faked war,”
he laughs at me in such a way that his laughing
becomes a dagger in my wounded heart and soul.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 78-79)

In Zhale's representation of her husband's figure and behaviour, he is subordinated to nationalistic values and has no care or courtesy for his wife. He shouts like a "roaring thunder". Zhale's poem prepares its readers to look at men and their bodies from a totally different conceptual space, where the feminine and female bodies cannot be reduced, devalued or expressed in masculine terms. Irigaray implies that men should start thinking and living in their own bodies and observe the world within their own terms without reducing 'others' (Irigaray, 1993: 98). For Irigaray, it is completely unimaginable to situate herself in a man's position, to reflect his ideas or be his voice and deliver his language:

But is it up to me, I wonder, to speak of the other 'man'? It's curious, because it's a question that I am constantly being asked. I find it quite amusing [...] I am constantly being asked what that 'other' man will be. Why should I appropriate for myself what that 'other' man would have to say? What I want and what I am waiting to see is what men will do and say if their sexuality releases its hold on the empire of phallocentrism. But this is not for a woman to anticipate, or foresee, or prescribe. (Irigaray, 1985: 136)

Zhale, in a similar manner, calls for her husband to question his own relation to what is formed and projected as 'humanity' by the conventional language produced by men. For Zhale the term 'humanity' has yet to be fulfilled, hence in the poem she requires the need to cultivate the space or in Irigaray's term, *limit*: "you should talk in a different way to a woman". Therefore, for Zhale, to deconstruct the conventional, masculine interpretation of the meaning of a human being, she has to return to the reality of sexual difference as the basis for the universal. Irigaray points to this perception of universal and the 'limit' as sexual difference in her *I love to you* (1996): "I belong to the universal in recognizing that I am a woman. The woman's singularity is in having a particular genealogy and history. But belonging to a gender represents a universal that exists prior to me. I have to accomplish it in relation to my particular destiny" (Irigaray, 1996: 39).

Zhale calls on her husband to cultivate a limit, the space of their represented gender and his male embodiment in relation to her body. By employing the technique of mimesis, as well as using the conditional sentence at the beginning of the line to create a degree of suspense, Zhale places her own space (limit) to remind him of his own: "If I tell him: oh man! I am a woman". In other words, by stressing her place (limit), "I am a woman", she makes her husband rethink the universal and the world. According to

Irigaray (1996), returning to oneself or “*self-affection*” is a determining factor in reaching “being-two”, the duality of two different subjects. What Zhale suggests is that acknowledging self-affection would enable the poet and the husband to preserve a sense of wholeness, preparing them to interact and have a dialogue with each other from an equal horizon. Without returning to oneself (self-affection), according to Irigaray, there can be no relationships of wonder. Zhale invites her husband to cultivate this “space in between”: “I am a lover of peace, not of war”. Irigaray argues that without this return and by not acknowledging self-affection one will fall into one-sided relationships of control and possession, and there would not be a respect for the uniqueness of the other. Acknowledging self-affection and the return to oneself is “indispensable for the respect of the other” (Irigaray, 2004: 188). That is why, upon Zhale’s invitation toward her husband to the space of self-affection and her husband’s laughter, she becomes disappointed and his laughter turns to a dagger in her wounded heart and soul.

Zhale explains more of her husband’s disrespectful and unjust heart in another poem, “Longing for Love”:

Yet I served my heart’s search for love, for the sake of my husband.
 I had a lovely face, was well behaved! What a shame!
 A sour face was all I got from the practice of love.
 A grim, ugly and heavy-hearted husband,
 who’s not only old, he’ll have nothing to do with talk of love[.]

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 111).

After inviting her husband to return to the space of self-affection, Zhale closes her poem with an explanation of sexuate difference and the problem of a subjectivity in which the phallogocentric structure privileges masculinity as the active subject, while femininity is viewed as the passive object. Zhale argues that her position can demonstrate the condition of other Iranian women:

People say that one called “husband”
 is God to the wife.
 He is a man, the God of my existence.
 No! no! he’s a preordained affliction.
 What is a woman? An acquiescent effigy,
 While a man is a boasting sculptor.
 If he drives me away, he is the Benevolent,
 If he beats me in rage, he is the Powerful.

Yes! He's a man and I'm a woman,
 A woman is a puppet: dust on her head!
 Who am I? A weak creature
 Whose name and being are mockery and scorn.
 Alas! Alas! In this country where oppression rules
 A woman has no refuge, nor any arbiter.
 If people use the name of existence and non-existence
 For men and women, these names suit them.
 Woman is the disgrace of the world
 Because she's wrapped in a tar-black veil.
 (Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 79)

In earlier lines Zhale shows her strong objection to the objectification of women after their marriage when they are possessed by their husbands and men become the God of their existence: "No! No! He's a preordained affliction". The poet by repeating or mimicking negative perspectives of femininity enables her audience to hold a mirror up to their culture, so she can expose and disturb the dominant patriarchal interpretation of femininity. According to Irigaray, this will allow women to repossess the place of their exploitation. Through the technique of mimicry, Zhale is able to criticise the dominant discourse that classifies the feminine as weak and defines her subject position as a "non-existent" creature. The terms she uses for this purpose are: weak creature, God, acquiescent, puppet, dust, mockery, scorn, non-existence, disgrace, black. By using these words in her poem she shifts the feminine reduction into an affirmation. By this method, instead of creating a feminine language that is completely distinct from phallogocentric discourse, Zhale penetrates the existing system of meaning. Therefore, similar to Irigaray, she can "thwart any manipulation of discourse [...] Its function would thus be to cast phallogocentrism, phallogocriticism, loose from its moorings in order to return the masculine to its own language, leaving open the possibility of a different language" (Irigaray, 1985: 80). Thus, femininity becomes here a kind of protester of her objectification.

There is limited data on Parvin's personal features and the events of her life. She was shy by nature and had limited contact with the male admirers of her work. Farzaneh Milani argues that Parvin's poetry conveys "perhaps most eloquently the push and pull between self-assertion and self-denial, between self-revelation and self-concealment, that many women must have felt who wanted to unveil but could not do so easily at

once” (Milani, 1992: 102). She always lived under the protective seclusion of her family, especially her father, and her poetry remained almost unaffected by her personal experiences. Her poetry collection, *Diwan*, contains few *ghazals*, so she never expressed feelings of love and longing in her poetry. Anecdotes, strife and dialogue (*Monazareh*) comprise the largest portion of her poetry collection. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the poet’s silence in reaction to her marriage and divorce. She only wrote three couplets related to this:

O flower! What did you experience of sitting in the flower garden?
 What, other than reproach and maliciousness of the thorn?
 O heart lightening jewel, with all your light
 What, other than a naive customer in the market did you see?
 You went to the flower garden, but the cage was your destiny
 Other than a cage, what did you experience, O you the prisoned bird?
 (Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2015)

Parvin’s poetry, in contrast to Zhale’s, shows an obligation toward the moral standards of her society. The female voice in Parvin’s poetry is not as strong as in Zhale’s poems. Unlike Zhale, she does not refer to herself directly with pronouns to state her subject position. She uses a figurative language to disguise her identity with words such as ‘flower’ and ‘jewel’. However, through the poetic style of language, Parvin is trying to articulate a new form of feminine language.

The Theme of Women’s ‘Position and Education’ in Zhale and Parvin’s Poetry

These female poets emerged at a time when Iranian women were confronted with social and educational restrictions. They were kept in silence and their social position was very poor. During the constitutional period their poems were tools for challenging this oppression. The poets struggled to inform other women of their rights. They mainly placed emphasis on issues that were spiritual, intellectual and fundamental, and emphasised the necessity of women’s education. They stressed the fact that the inferiority of women in Iran was rooted in the absence of knowledge. It was argued earlier that women’s movements in Iran developed in three stages of awakening. The first and second stages of women’s awakening were very effective in bringing women’s issues to the public sphere, particularly in the fields of marriage, polygamy, women’s right to education, and issues concerning women’s isolation and veiling in public spaces. These ideas spread widely throughout their writings. With the arrival of regular

printing, the third stage of women's awakening occurred and women started to cover all these issues in their own publications and to speak from their own perspectives.

Zhale's poetry concentrated on these issues as she questioned the rights of women in Iranian society, their facial covering, as well as their relationships with men. Blaming men for her society and religion, she also condemns women for not attempting to improve their position, and advises them to get educated. The poem "*Payam be Zanan-e Ayandeh*" ("A Message to Women of the Future") expresses Zhale's pain, pain she claims cannot be experienced by men of her society, who see the world by way of the one-sex theory. Zhale's view reflects Irigaray's argument in *Speculum of the Other Woman* that the imaginary body which dominates on a cultural level is a masculine body. Zhale refers to her bodily existence that is believed to be merely a variation of the men in her society, and argues that her pains have therefore been ignored. She criticises men for expanding their own, male experience of the world into a general, universal theory that applies to all:

If a man intentionally hurts a woman, he is not a man.
for he who has not felt pain is not aware of the sigh of one feeling pain.
You can say that every mote of dust indicates a horseman fighting,
But there is no one behind this mote [i.e. Woman] but a child, not a rider.
(Translated Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 53)

The title of Zhale's poem itself is a reflection of her concern not only for certain women in her society, but for women in general who suffer from this violation. Through the technique of mimesis, Zhale breaks the conventional image of a woman in her society from a "mote" to the only one who can bear a child. The use of the word "mote" in her poem is to compare the position of women in her society to a particle of dust. The metaphor indicates the reduction of the position of women to being under the gallop of a powerful horseman, who sees that the only purpose of women is reproduction. According to Irigaray, reducing women to male experience is the reason for the concept that women are incomplete men. Irigaray believes such a reduction results in not acknowledging women's subjectivity and their relation to origin (Irigaray et al., 1985: 34). Zhale's use of mimesis allows her and her readers to re-enter the discursive positions where women were eliminated and then to alter or mirror back the way in which women are reduced to their maternal role within masculine structures.

In the next couplet of the poem, Zhale criticises men for not observing their religious mandate, but immediately she also directly condemns the religion and the norms of her society for the current status of women:

What destiny gives us, through these Muslims who know nothing of faith,
is nothing but warm tears, cold sighs and a pale complexion.

The Chains of chastity, tradition, the Islamic law [based on Sharia Law], and
common law

are all the adornment of women's feet; they are not on men's feet.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 53)

She stresses that women will undergo pain from their reduced positions if the laws of religion retain discrimination between men and women. In other words, Zhale, just like Irigaray, suggests the necessity of rethinking religion (Irigaray, 1996: 212). Her mimesis technique here subverts traditional religious discourse and empowers women's subjectivity. Zhale builds up her argument by comparing their situation to the position of women in Europe: "In the West, women have a society and a measure of power, / but in our land, if women gather together, they will not be alone" (translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 53).

Criticising men for the reduction of women's position, in the next lines she begins to criticise women for not attempting to change their condition and instead for believing in superstitious fortune tellers. Admiring the benefits of education, in the next line, Zhale raises her tone and provides her own advice to women:

My dear! Some effort, aspiration, commotion, rebellion, and endeavour!

The city of existence is nothing but a battlefield.

O women! Mobilise, so that a world can see

what we have is not less than what men possess.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 53)

Although she herself won't be able to see for of women in her country, she states that her poem will survive for the women of future generations:

O beloved future generation! I have passed from this world.

The departed leave only books and sayings as souvenirs.

Whatever survives of my collected poetry

is a dry leaf on the branch of speech, unless it is a rose.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 53)

In her poem “The Difference between Men and Women” (2014) Zhale refers to the issue of the veil and criticises the practice:

My Sister asked: “What is the difference between men and women? I answered:
 “I will tell you this difference briefly.
 In the workshop of creation, men and women’s genus was the same.
 But we spend our life in a sack with a closed opening.[”]

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 65)

Zhale compares the veil to a sack, which is a very strong and militant interpretation of women’s status in society. In another poem, “Living in a Harem” (2014), she goes further and represents the veil as ‘torture’:

There are many who are proud of me, but for the crime of womanhood,
 It’s as if I’m no one, in the dust-heap of humanity.
 In the graveyard of the harem, with a tar-colored shroud
 I’m thrown like a bit of straw in the gutter of life[.]

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 37).

She concludes:

If I am the monster who waits by the road, this bondage and torture is more than
 enough.
 O hand of God! Come to the door, and strike the heavy chains
 from the feet of women. This is my prayer. (ibid)

In this poem, Zhale has the same attitude as Irigaray on the issue of the veil. She interprets the veil as the fetishization of a woman’s body. Irigaray believes that women’s use of jewellery and make-up is a struggle to “compete in the phallic economy” (Irigaray, 1985: 114). She argues that women’s use of make-up is part of their phallo-capitalistic strategy to intensify their commodity value in the reproductive approach to their body. In other words, the veil has a paradoxical function in this strategy and women show off their make-up or jewellery in order to better conceal their genitals, to remind them of their ‘nothingness’, of having no value. The woman, according to Irigaray, is displayed with make-up because she is veiled: “Ensuring this double game of flaunting her body, her jewels, in order to hide her sex organs all the better [...] to sell herself, a woman has to veil as best she can how priceless she is in the sexual economy” (ibid: 115). The gesture of veiling for Irigaray is like a mask which hides “the faults of Nature, and restores her in her wholeness”. She believes this act of her will smooths the “exchange of goods without knowledge of their effective value”

(ibid). The veil, for Zhale, reduces the individual subject to a commodity, making them identical or universal objects of consumption, so women can be exchanged easily in the phallic economic system. Zhale, through the technique of mimesis, reverses the concept in the poem by revealing the general view of people about herself, who are proud of her only for her functionality as a woman. She repeats the concept that she is “no one” and has no subjectivity of her own. The black cover made her subjectivity concealed in the harem, the place of phallic market.

In contrast to Zhale, Parvin’s *Diwan* (1941) contains 248 poems in different forms, and only a few poems are about the debate on Iranian women’s rights and position, specifically their absence in educational fields. In 1924 Parvin referred to Iranian women’s suffering in a speech during her graduation and how she hoped in time for this to alter with the efforts of intellectuals. However, her own position after ten years, like other scholars, remained almost silent towards women’s concerns. As discussed, this was due to the control of the Shah and the harassment of the mob towards women and certain behaviours that were considered to be against Sharia law. Parvin later, in 1935, refers back to this silent period in her *Zan dar Iran* (*Women in Iran*) (1936) and explains the status of women in her poem “*Ganj-e Iffat*” (“Hidden Treasure of Chastity”) (1936):

Formerly a woman in Iran was almost non-Iranian.
 All she did was struggle through dark and distressing days.
 Her life she spent in isolation; she died in isolation.
 What was she then if not a prisoner?
 None ever lived centuries in darkness like her.
 None was sacrificed on the altar of hypocrisy like her.
 In the courts of justice no witness defended her.
 To the school of learning she was not admitted.
 All her life her cries for justice remained unheeded [...]
 The light of knowledge was kept from her eyes [...]
 A woman lived in a cage and died in a cage.
 The name of this bird in the rose garden was never mentioned.
 (Etesami, 1985: 107)

In this poem Parvin indicates women’s status in society. She pictures the male-controlled society and gives examples of women being classified under the conventional masculine laws. Parvin’s concern for women’s education in this poem is emphasised,

and she states that women have always been kept in a prison by society and its laws. She concludes the line by stating that such codes denounced women from their subjectivity, and their identity was always kept in silence. In another poem, “The Sapling of the Wishes” (“*Nahel-e Arezoo*”) (1936), she encourages women to gain knowledge, and argues that the inferiority of women and their oppressed condition originates from their lack of knowledge:

The inferiority of women is rooted in lack of knowledge
It is rooted in superiority of the men on the women
Today we have light of knowledge in our hands
It is the quest of effort and happiness
It is better to gain knowledge
To not to say the boy is knowledgeable and the girl is stupid[.]
(Translated by Behzadi & Dehghan, 2014: 365)

The poem continues:

The woman became famous in any nation by gaining knowledge
Is there nobody to awake us of this sleep?
Whenever the women are unaware of their rights
The name of this nation is not written in any book[.]
(ibid, *Diwan*: 365)

Finally, Parvin concludes in a rather conservative fashion, by seeing women’s primary purpose as child-rearing and reproduction of the family. She emphasises that the place of a mother and her valuable role in the upbringing of children should be recognised as the first steps of gaining knowledge. Parvin’s attention to the role of the mother can be compared to Irigaray’s emphasis on the cultivation of a mother-daughter relationship to gain self-knowledge. As Irigaray discusses, “women must love one another both as mothers, with a maternal love, and as daughters, with a filial love. Both of them” (Irigaray, 1993: 89). Parvin believed that the women in her society cannot reach this, and that they are condemned to look for love and self-knowledge endlessly. Therefore she invites women to search for knowledge so that they can end their misery. But Parvin’s love has a mystical quality. As Zarrinkoob states, Parvin is a poet of a morality which is based on spiritual ideas. In other words, unlike Zhale, what she wishes for women is the moral knowledge which shows the purpose of life beyond material and sexual desires (Zarrinkoob, 1994: 370-371). For Parvin, God represents all the world and love. For her, piety, virtue and self-respect are the primary factors and one cannot

be censured for his/her gender circumstances: “Whether man or woman whom is great and happy / That has picked the fruit of the knowledge garden” (Behzadi & Dehghan, 2014: 188). Parvin believes lack of knowledge (ignorance) causes harm and mistreatment of women:

They should make effort to learn knowledge and skills
to release themselves.

By gaining knowledge clean this mirror

Polish it by virtue

How you read philosophy and wisdom

When you did not read the alphabets[.]

(Behzadi & Dehghan, 2014: 149)

According to Parvin, morality and virtue for women appear only by the acquisition of knowledge and she invites women in her poems to contemplate their position. In one of her poems, “*Do Mahzar*” (“Two Courts”) (1941), she challenges the position of women as judges. According to the Islamic Judicial system of Iran, women are not capable of judging in a court. In this poem, by the use of the technique of mimesis and masquerade, Parvin defends women’s ability to reverse the masculine system of thought and show that women can also be influential in judgment roles:

I cannot be a jury anyway

Take everything instead of me

Afterward, I am neither obedient nor pioneer

Since I will be at home like you

I will be released of any accounts like you

I only account feeding, sleeping and traveling[.]

(Behzadi & Dehghan, 2014: 226)

In this poem Parvin presents a quiescent housewife who is blamed for not being useful, her daily responsibilities and house chores are degraded by her husband who is like a judge in court. The woman, in response to his reaction, expresses her feelings thus:

You said about your job several times, but I kept silent
and now you see it

I put down hundred sparks in a moment

I am sometimes hand, sometimes eye and ear[.]

(ibid)

Parvin puts on a mask of womanliness, temporarily, to recover and improve women's desire and identity. In the beginning, she mentions some of the common male-defined roles: feeding, sleeping, traveling and being money-oriented (gold lover). This stage is simply to parrot male discourse. In other words, Parvin first uses the masquerade to share the ideology of man's desire, as Irigaray states, "to recuperate some element of [her] desire" (Irigaray, 1985: 133-134). Irigaray argues that: "A woman has to enter into the masquerade of femininity [...] into a system of values that is not hers, and in which she can "appear" and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely, men" (ibid). Parvin, in a similar way, writes of men's desires to possess her identity, showing her objectified value in a male-controlled system. However, she does not allow herself to remain in this reduced role, controlled by the husband and his objectifying gaze. She uses mimesis to recuperate the place of her exploitation. Parvin enables the woman to expose her invisibility by playful repetition. By the end of the poem, when the husband has left to lament and regret how he saw his wife, the woman (wife) renounces her position as the object of speech and destabilises the masculine image of herself as his servant.

Finally, Parvin, in contrast with Zhale, develops rather conservative, cautious language about women's veiling practices in her poems. Parvin's attitude is well explained by Farzaneh Milani, who believes Parvin's poetry conveys "perhaps most eloquently the push and pull between self-assertion and self-denial, between self-revelation and self-concealment, that many women must have felt who wanted to unveil but could not do so easily or at once" (Milani, 1992: 102). Parvin has an ethical and didactic outlook towards women's veiling, and in her poem "*Ganj-e-Iffat*" ("Hidden Treasure of Chastity"), written after the 1936 unveiling decree, she articulates urban women's delight concerning their unveiled presence in the public arena, but simultaneously she also shows women's uncertain feelings towards these principles of modernity. Parvin is not sure whether or not to maintain the traditional concepts of her society. Although she criticises women's repression in the period before the 1936 unveiling decree, she concludes her poem with advice to women to protect their morality and chastity for an uncertain future:

So walk along the path that's straight, on the crooked way
No guidance, no provisions [...] only remorse you'll be finding.
Eyes and hearts do not need any veil, any veil of chastity [...]

Basis of faith in Islam is not a worn-out *chador* [Persian way of covering] I'm saying.

(Translated by Paul Smith, 2015: 81-82)

Parvin was influenced by her father's work, which was well known for non-traditional, feminist views. Parvin studied her father's translation of Qasem Amin's *The Emancipation of Women* (1939) and his own book *The Education of Women* (1939). She was aware of her father's thoughts and she reproduced them in her own poetry to convey the idea that the practice of unveiling women will not guarantee their freedom, but it can make them ignore themselves and feel the influence of Western culture. Although Parvin employed ambivalent language towards women's veiling, her attitude is very similar to Irigaray's thoughts regarding cultivating women's identity independently; that they should not become commodities of a patriarchal system, used to represent the system's ideology.

The Theme of 'the Concept of Motherhood' in Zhale and Parvin's Poetry

Through the concept of "motherhood", Zhale and Parvin explored female identity and validated women's nurturing capabilities and maternal practices. They both argued for a female essence through biological and physical features, but simultaneously their poems incorporated opposing notions of the social interpretation of women. Their poetry cultivates awareness by restructuring the normative practices of maternity, thus supporting women who resist and challenge the male-oriented powers. In addition, like Irigaray, Zhale and Parvin are concerned with the destructive quality of the mother-daughter relationship. They illustrate the devaluing of this relation to be influenced by the lack of dialogue and an inability of the daughter to build a space effectively between herself and her mother. Following Irigaray, reconfiguring the mother-daughter relationship, or genealogy of women, strengthens female subjectivity in their poetry.

Zhale articulates her own experience of motherhood in several of her poems. It can be understood from her poems that she was pregnant a number of times, and gave birth to a boy, Naser. She lost her baby when he was only 4 months old and wrote about the distressing experience in her poem "On a Child's Death" (2014). She could only bring up one son, Pezhman. But she even lost him after her divorce from her husband, and she wrote about her pain of losing her child in the poem "Far from a Child", comparing it to Jacob and Joseph's story in the Q'uran. In another poem, "A Mother's Duty", Zhale shows her disassociated experience of pregnancy and the maternal world:

I read the story of a mother's love

Then I cast a glance at myself.

I saw that one night, out of no heart's desire, [I agreed with my body to yield to my husband.

He placed a burden in my heart] which I've described in various ways.

Because of this heavy burden,

I made my narrow waist like the canopy of an elm tree,

Not with love, but with instinct I nourished him,

Not forming him with discerning intellect.

I placed him to my breast, gave him milk, and then left:

A dog does the same as I did.

(Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 83)

Zhale compares her own emotions to the story of a mother's love she has read about. She believes her experience is in contrast with the story and she describes it as "out of no heart's desire". The baby is described as a heavy burden who deformed her body. She shows her limit as an "elm tree" that has to comply with the form and shape it is taking. Zhale feels a great distance from both her husband and her baby, and the gap intensifies after the baby is born. She confesses that her reason for feeding the baby was only an instinctual feeling and not because of love. She even goes further and compares her unsentimental experience to a dog's instinct to care for its baby. Zhale's authoring of her emotions is in contrast with the eternal and the unconditional bond of love between the mother and child that is always imagined in Persian classical poems, and the religious and cultural norms of her society. The poet expresses her own situation as a divorcée and a single mother who is not willing to conform to conventional norms. Zhale explicitly places the idealisation of motherhood under question. She continues to repeat her experience and interpretation of the pregnancy in other poems such as "Mother's Love" (2014). The literary representations of motherhood voiced in Zhale's poems reposition mothers as individuals and subjects. This repositioning can be found, for example, in the first lines of the poem: "Seek the thought of a mother's love / from one who delights the heart, / not from one who at the merest trifle / withdraws from wife and children" (translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 109). Zhale here stresses that "motherly love" can only be felt and experienced by women and not by men.

However, Zhale was not content only attacking male authority and repositioning mothers as subjects. She goes further and, like Irigaray, repudiates the patriarchal idea

of pregnancy. She rejects the passive feature of pregnancy and presents the act of pregnancy as an active-passive dynamic which has immanent-transcendent characteristics. Irigaray rejects the idea of the foetus as a parasite and argues that: “The placental economy is therefore an organised economy [...] which respects the one and the other. Unfortunately, our cultures, split off from the natural order [...] neglect or fail to recognise the almost ethical character of the foetal relation” (Irigaray, 1993: 41).

According to Irigaray, to become pregnant is a unique opportunity to breathe for another and hold authority, giving a space for the other to exist. Conscious breathing for the other provides a transcendental space for women to articulate their subjectivity. Moreover, the act of giving conscious birth, according to Irigaray, is a beginning point for “women’s being” and forces them into the depths of knowing the other, which in Irigaray’s words is a “personal renaissance”. Irigaray states that “the mother gives her breath and lets the other go; she gives the other life and autonomy. From the beginning, she passes on physical and metaphysical existence to the other” (Irigaray and Pluháček, 2002: 81). Irigaray believes an actual pregnancy occurs as a result of ethical commitment, and corporeal desire between the couples and women in such an ethical relation won’t be reduced to ‘otherness’. The lack of this commitment in a spiritless union will result in bringing a child into a patriarchal system. Zhale has the same interpretation of her pregnancy and giving birth to a child. She tears down the patriarchal notions of motherhood and shows that having a child by a pregnancy without love or recognition of the mother’s subjectivity is a hopeless act. She becomes more radical and writes that it would be better for girls to die in the womb than to have no rights in society: “I wished that girls might not show their heads / from their mother’s wombs” (translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 41). Moreover, Zhale, similar to Irigaray, considers the recognition and articulation of the genealogy of women through the mother-daughter relationship. She wishes for her daughter not to be born into a society which is unready to cultivate such new meanings of motherhood since she (her daughter) will end up with the same fate as her mother. Zhale advises women to improve their position: “The shoe of success would be ready to wear, / if women would support each other” (ibid). In other words, Zhale gives to her unborn daughter the possibility of spirit and soul to get out of the patriarchal order and to obtain a subject position. Similar to Irigaray, Zhale stresses the importance of a maternal representation of women’s genealogy, which is according to Irigaray “an essential condition for the constitution of their identity” (Irigaray, 1993: 48).

Zhale has the same attitude to her unborn child in another poem, "To an Unborn Child" (2014), and asks her unborn child (regardless of the child's sex) to untie his or her connection with her in her womb. Although she loves her child deeply, she believes that to bring him to this world is like a blissful rose rising from "a dry-lipped thorn". In her last line she calls herself and her husband "criminals" for not being sufficiently responsible for their child's existence, and confirms the lack of ethical commitment in their mutual relations in bringing the child into society:

O child I was the one who caused this concern,
 These black-imaged thoughts: I have what I deserve.
 We criminals are responsible for your being,
 O baby, knowing nothing of the world, O innocent child of mine!
 (Translated by Seyed Gohrab, 2014: 71)

Most of the poetry produced by Parvin Etesami follows the classical forms and features of Persian poetry, and only five of her poems raise awareness of women and development of female poetry in Iran. In these few poems, she explores the nature of women, argues for their difference to the other sex, and shows her resistance to patriarchal society. Parvin did not experience being a mother herself, but she was influenced by her own relationship with her mother. Her poetry also deliberately reflects and idealises the mother-daughter relationship. She explores female identity through the notions of motherhood, women's nurturing and maternal instinct. Her poetry emphasises women's roles in the social, political and religious spheres. In her poetry she speaks of motherly compassion and presents her delicate spirit and voice through the dialects of birds, depressed, underprivileged mothers and poor people. Her poem "Hadith of Kindness" (2014) is a good example of her evaluation of the concept of motherhood in a male-oriented society. She calls to women from this poem to remind them of their place as wives and mothers. Parvin challenges the concept of motherhood, via a conversation between a pigeon and a sparrow, and asks women to polish themselves by gaining knowledge through arts so they can achieve their rights: "No effort is sweet like that of a mother for her child. / I have not found anything more blessed than this yet"; she continues: "Also, if you are surrounded with small children / except mothering them, you won't do something else / there was a time when my duty was not nurturing / and I was observing the scenery like you do now" (translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini from Etesami, 1992: 141).

Parvin discusses more about this subject in her poem “The Sapling of the Wishes” (2014), and reminds women of their valuable role in raising their children, encouraging them to gain knowledge and not to be ignorant: “The primary teacher of a child is her mother. / No ignorant mother can raise a learned child” (ibid). She asks for a return to our origins, to the ‘mother’, or to what Irigaray explains as “this first body, this first home, this first love” (cited in Whitford, 1992: 39). Because of her ignorance, she cannot place herself within a female genealogy, and she is incapable of symbolising a mother-daughter relationship. According to Irigaray, following Lacan, our origins are replaced by a male language which “privileges the masculine genre to such an extent as to confuse it with the human race” (ibid). The mother, because of this lack of symbolic representation, is imagined as a “devouring monster”. In order to retain their identity Irigaray suggests that women must retain their love for their mother. The need to modify the mother-daughter relationship is a constant theme in Irigaray’s work. Parvin, similar to Irigaray, also thinks that change begins with individual relationships between women, and for this reason they need to gain knowledge of each other. In “The Angel of Intimacy” (“*Fereshte-ye Ons*”) (1936) Parvin reveals the importance of a mother’s role, and through the technique of mimesis she reverses the concept of conventional motherhood:

Without a woman, a home is lacking in love and amity:
 When the heart of one is cold the soul’s dead, or will be.
 There’s no book or discourse saying Providence decrees
 Excellence belongs to man, and less [...] woman’s share is.

(Translated by Paul Smith, 2015: 92)

By overlapping sexual-social and economic theories, similar to Irigaray, Parvin distinguishes between the use value of women as mothers who give birth to children, and their developing, independent subjectivity in patriarchal society:

Due to their mothers, Socrates and Plato were great [...]
 Because those mothers, who nurtured them were great!
 In his cradle, Lochman was succoured by his mother,
 Long before he went to school to become a philosopher.
 Whether they heroes, mystics or ascetics or judges be,
 In her school each of them was her pupils [...] originally.
 (ibid)

According to Irigaray, “the circulation of women among men is what establishes the operations of society, at least of patriarchal society” (Irigaray, 1985: 184). The mother Parvin introduces in her poem has an individual subjectivity that resists and threatens the patriarchal order because as a mother she refuses to be limited to a reproductive role. Parvin introduces her as the first teacher and the origin of every hero and philosopher.

Irigaray argues how Plato in his cave myth, “Plato’s Hysteria” in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, promotes a metaphor for eliminating the female subject and maternal origins in favour of the masculine. In Plato’s cave, the fire inside the cave is perceived as the source of false images, and the journey out of the cave is considered to be the source of wisdom, knowledge and freedom from illusions. Irigaray in her re-evaluation of the cave renames it to “the den, the womb or hysteria” (Irigaray, 1985: 243). In this Irigarayan reading of the cave, the maternal womb of origin, the mother is ignored by men who see women as “amorphous, formless, a pit, chasm in which he risks losing his form” (Irigaray, 1993: 59). Like Irigaray, Parvin wishes to reconsider the metaphor of light and to acknowledge it as the place where subjectivity is cultivated. In an Irigarayan reading of the cave, when the ‘father’ desires to seek an absolute being, “He no longer has any foundation, he is beyond all beginnings” (Irigaray, 1985: 307).

Conclusion

Irigaray’s deconstructive methodology can be used as a means to study the approaches in which female poets deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations during the constitutional period in Iran. Many elements of this period’s themes can be identified.

This chapter has showed how the poets, Zhale and Parvin, in their poetry developed themes concerning a woman’s ability to establish herself as an independent subjectivity. For this purpose, Irigaray offers an account of the development of a specifically female subject voice within a patriarchal culture that can be illuminating when applied to Iranian cultural history and Iranian women’s poetry. Poems by Zhale and Parvin were analysed to show how these poets started to criticise the reduction of the female to the ‘other’ of man. The strategies used by Zhale and Parvin in their poetry are comparable to those used by Irigaray. Similar to Irigaray, in this phase they emphasise the importance of education and gaining knowledge through their poetry. The poets’ call to articulate through difference and ethical approaches was evident in their work and had a significant role throughout their works. To analyse the contexts of the poems, the thematic concerns around gender issues in their poetry were discussed, to

assess the poets' inclination toward feminist themes in this period. Because of the limitations of this study, only a few topics of analysis were chosen: the themes of 'marriage, divorce and the husband', 'women's position and education' and 'the concept of motherhood'.

Analysis of the poems revealed that the poets' search for self-awareness and recognition of women's identity was to a great extent also dependent upon their reflection on the concept of *Sharm* (self-erasure). My analysis of poems by Zhale concludes that gender identity in her poems is detached from the concept of *sharm* and that she expresses her feelings more freely, without restrictions. On the other hand, Parvin's poems of reflection on gender identity are shielded. She does not refer to herself directly or state her subject position, and she employs more figurative language to disguise her identity. Parvin is more restrained in recognising the suffering and pain of women in her society. She uses a cautious, more concealed language, making use of animal figures and associated objects to portray her message. She has an ethical approach and self-control in behaviour and appearance; confinement of physical mobility and sexuality are all features of her poems, which also reflect the characteristics of society's power over gender politics in that period.

Although both Zhale and Parvin wrote their poems in the same period, Zhale wrote her poetry in secret and therefore, unlike Parvin, she was not obliged to follow the moral standards of her society in creating or publishing her poems. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the feminist voice in her poetry is stronger because she didn't submit her writing to the standards of the power structures of classical Persian literature. It can be understood that the poetry of women who started to publish in this period was slow in initiating debate on women's issues and transgressing political boundaries, as they had to consider the repressive standards of the authority before their own voice. Despite all the differences, most of the poetry stressed the importance of women's self-awareness and education, and their persuasive presence in the political and social movements of the time (even if their language was cautious). This turned their poetry into a platform for subsequent poets to challenge the concept of *sharm*. This chapter has provided a framework for the exploration of the poems produced by women in Mohammad-Reza Shah's period in the next chapter. The poems of Forough Farrokhzad and Simin Behbahani continue the debate concerning gender issues. It will be discussed how, for the first time in the literary history of Iran, these poets broke the boundaries and openly articulated their sexuality, desire and pleasure. It will be argued that the

poets continued the critical approach in their poetry, similar to Irigaray's second phase, in search of ways of recognition of the female subject. In other words, it will be analysed how, in the second phase, poets attempted to cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously shifted back to 'the reality of two' more openly without being so restricted by the norms of social power structures, a feminist journey that was begun by Zhale and Parvin.

Chapter Five: Irigarayan Theory and Practice in the Poetry of Forough Farrokhzad

Introduction

With Reza Shah's departure from Iran in September 1941, poetry enjoyed twelve years of relative freedom from Reza Shah's control. Poetry became a platform for 'democratic struggle'. Anti-religious themes began to appear within the works of many poets. The political era between the fall of Reza Shah in 1941 and the coup that overthrew Prime Minister Mosaddegh in 1953 was tumultuous and stressful. However, literature with dominant themes such as nationalism, romanticism and modernism found momentum, aiming to bless pre-Islamic Iran, question the Sharia laws, and show a desire for the Westernisation of the country. In other words, the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 and the subjugation of the country by the Allied forces could be defined as a breaking point from the censorship that dominated Reza Shah's period. Many writers celebrated this freedom in their work.

Nima Youshij, for example, in his poem "In the Cold Winter Night" (1950), cannot hide his joy and celebrates the moment of this freedom. He claims that no lamp is as luminous as his, and it cannot be stopped by the cold moon. Although the poet is aware of his occupied neighbours, he has lit his lamp:

And no lamp is luminous as mine
Neither it freezes by the cold moon that shines above.
I lit my lamp when my neighbor was walking in a dark night[.]
(Translated by M. Alexandrian)

During the years 1941-1953 a diversity of opinions started to flourish in many fields which resulted in the formation of different political and intellectual associations. The literature of this period used assorted structures and various themes developed. Many writers of this period considered joining political parties to advocate and promote liberty. In an analysis of female poets of this period, Milani states: "Feelings are not rationalised, passions are not diluted, emotions are not flattened, details are not evaded, and men are not absent. These writers created to varying degrees, a sense of self divorced from the conventional definition of womanhood in Iran" (Milani, 1992: 127).

Moreover, during these twelve years, anti-dictatorship sentiment flourished. In the meantime, some writers and intellectuals, such as Simin Behbahani, were tempted by Soviet socialist discourse, and in their work they reflected the workers as powerful

elements in political and social change. Behbahani included examples of social issues in her collections *Seh-tar-e Shekasteh* (*The Broken Lute*, 1951), *Ja-ye Pa* (*Footprint*, 1954) and *Chelcheragh* (*Chandelier*, 1955). Behbahani's personas in her poetry of this period are not autobiographical and attempt to give voice to the peasants and prisoners.

In this period, a larger percentage of the people were literate and educated in the Western education system than in the previous periods. For this reason, there was a greater interest in knowledge, democracy, freedom of expression and transforming society, when compared to previous periods. Women in particular were confronted with a new identity, influenced both by their Iranian cultural norms and Western values.

This chapter analyses the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad. Analysis of the work of this poet, similar to my analysis of the poetry of the previous period, will identify changes in female voice, gender identity, and gender politics of the time. It will be analysed how she exposes women's struggle, and to what extent she is conforming to codes of *Sharm* (self-erasure). The strategies used by Forough in her poetry, compared to the previous female poets and also to her contemporaries, are arguably more comparable to those used by Irigaray. Through an analysis of her poetry it will be shown how she articulates difference and ethical approaches, things which she continued to focus on throughout her entire career. Similar to Irigaray, Forough's critical insights in her poetry will claim the need to establish a fresh and different "linguistic home". Therefore, this requires an alteration in the place of the subjects of enunciation as well as the recognition of two different dialogical subjects and a fresh listening to the other. The following analysis is an effort to illustrate that the poetry of Forough carries within itself the uniquely female voice that Irigaray has described in her critical theory. Accordingly, it focuses on Forough's poems through the project of "*parler femme*", to use Irigaray's term, as the discourse of femininity in a patriarchal literary world. More importantly, I shall demonstrate how Forough's poetry can be seen in terms similar to those used to characterise Irigaray's second phase of work, and how Forough, similar to Irigaray, attempts to cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously shift to returning to 'the reality of two' more openly.

Poetry after Reza Shah had some limited freedom, which makes the poetry of this time more revealing. Poets such as Nima (1895-1960) used this momentum to express their personal feelings for the first time. Female poets were not an exception in this group and started to expose their inner selves as well as their questioning of the patriarchal structure. As individual female poets, they started the search for self-

expression and breaking their silence. In a study of female poets of this period, Milani states:

Toward the middle of the present century, a new tradition of women's poetry came into being in Iran; a tradition of women intensely involved in self-reflection and self revelation, not sheltered or restrained by anonymity and opacity of veil [...] The authorial voice is neither subordinate to stereotypes nor hidden according to prescribed rules of psychology and social distance. (Milani, 1992: 127)

Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967)

Forough, as an Iranian female poet and film director, is a good example of the voice of women during this period. Forough's poetry is situated in the context of the intellectual movements of Mohammad Reza Shah's period and her perception of these movements' potential is to serve as catalysts for change (Shamisa, 1993: 255). Literary works by both men and women of this period were created within the context of a leftist oppositional literary setting. Different forms of socialist concepts and Marxist literary criticism inspired the authors' oppositional works, and were represented in committed literature (*adabiyat-e moti-ahid*). Simin Behbahani's thematic choice during this period is influenced by this movement. Forough's work is also a representation of the realities of the time but simultaneously she is considered among the creative poets who developed their own language and themes in their poetry. Her work can be divided into two distinctive parts. Her primary works, *Asir (Captive)*, *Divar (The Wall)* and *Esyān (Rebellion)*, written between 1955 and 1957, contain metaphors and images of love, passion, and pain. But her last collections, *Tavalodi Digar (Another Birth, 1964)* and *Iman Biyavarim Be Aghaz-e Fasl-e Sard (Let Us Believe in the Beginning of a Cold Season, 1959-1967)*, are more concerned with the social and cultural realities of the time (Talattof, 1997: 534). In her poetry Forough questions the code of *sharm* (self-erasure) and reveals the figure of a revolting woman. Forough, unlike Parvin, is not concealed and modest in her poetry. Self-awareness in her poetry is more explicit and she communicates an inner self. She describes her seclusion and depression, blaming the patriarchal structure for her subjugation. Forough is generous and enthusiastic toward her male subjects, although occasionally she advises women not to raise their expectations. It is through this process that she confronts the structure of male authority in her society. In search for an identity, Forough constantly strives for a dialogue with both men and women. She seeks to designate a positive place for female subjectivity in

the relational economy between men and women, similar to Irigaray; for Forough, diversity and difference are privileged over sameness. Moreover, the sense of touch in her poetry is not primarily for sexual desire, but is a form of a dialogue that suggests the sharing of a desire very similar to Irigaray's two-ness of the world. Irigaray pointed several times in her writing to the importance of recognising this two-ness in reflecting sexual difference, e.g. in her account of birth, she reflects: "I am born of man and of woman, and genealogical authority belongs to man and to woman" (Irigaray and Anderson, 2000: 131).

Exploring Forough's Five Collections

Unlike Parvin, Forough did not benefit from a privileged and wealthy family. She did not complete her education and married at the age of sixteen. However, her marriage, similar to Parvin's, was not successful and she had a divorce after three years, leaving her son in the custody of her husband. Her first collection of poetry, *Asir (Captive)*, comprising forty-four poems, was published in 1955, before her divorce. Her success as a poet and later as a film maker flourished in the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. In addition, unlike previous female poets, she was the first to rise to fame without the support of a prominent male figure. Although the majority of the poets of her time respected classical poetic forms, she is considered among the greatest modernist poets. Unfortunately, at age only 32, when she was at the peak of her career, she died in a car accident (Milani, 1992). Many of Forough's poems in her first collection *Captive*, including the following poem, can be viewed as Forough's exploration of gender construction in Iranian culture. In these poems, she explores the relation between the self and the 'other' (husband and lover) in her life. In this chapter, the poem "The Captive" is selected for analysis from Forough's first collection. The collection can be considered as the first published freely expressed feelings of a female poet because, as Michael Hillmann states, before Forough no woman freely expressed her feelings in the Persian literary tradition. The collection went through several editions in 1955, 1956 and 1963, within Forough's lifetime (Hillman, 1988: 3-6). Milani praises Forough's first collection for not censoring female desires. According to Milani, Forough's literary voice and confessions "are not rationalised, passions are not diluted, emotions are not flattened, details are not evaded, men are absent" (Milani, 1992: 127). In the final lines of "*Asir*" ("The Captive") Forough represents an image of a puzzled young woman surrounded by social expectations such as being a woman, a daughter, a wife, and

mother as well as a liberated poet, who contradicts the patriarchal conventions for women. On the publication of her first collection in Tehran, she was accused of an affair with a magazine editor and illustrations of the images of this relationship in her first collection were followed by scandalised criticism. Forough, in response, stated that:

I know that I have not accomplished anything extraordinary.
Rather, perhaps because no woman before me took steps toward
loosening these chains of constraints which have bound women's
hands and feet and because I have done this for the first time, all of
this commotion has arisen around me.
(Hillmann, 1987: 73-74).

In general, the recurring theme in Forough's early work, particularly the *Captive* collection, is the theme of silence and the encouragement to break it. Examples of her poems in each collection will be discussed accordingly.

Forough and the Theme of Marriage

Like Zhale, Forough reveals her experience of unsuccessful marriage in several poems. During and after her divorce, Forough found herself in a very difficult situation, surrounded by male-controlled laws and customs. After a short stay at her parents' home, she moved to her own apartment. Although she found herself independent, Forough felt the measureless risks for a woman at that period and went through a period of intense emotional torture that resulted in her being hospitalised for a month. In many of her poems Forough criticises conventional marriage and compares it to a cage and prison for women. For example, in the poem, "The Captive" (*Asir*) she illustrates the feelings of a woman who decides to divorce, but she fears separation from her child:

I want you, yet I know that never
Can I embrace you to my heart's content
you are that clear and bright sky.
I, in this corner of the cage, am a captive bird.
from behind the cold and dark bars
directing toward you my rueful look of astonishment,
I am thinking that a hand might come
and I might suddenly spread my wings in your direction.
I am thinking that in a moment of neglect
I might fly from this silent prison,
laugh in the eyes of the man who is my jailer

and beside you begin life anew.

(Translated by Hillmann, 1990: 158)

Forough uses the metaphor of a captive bird for a woman living in a marriage without love. However, she stresses that for a woman even in an unsuccessful marriage, it is difficult to leave her maternal feelings behind and she is always responsible for her child's life, even if she ruins her own. For Irigaray, a marriage contract is a form of exchange between men, the father and the husband. Forough in evaluation of marriage, similar to Irigaray argues that if there is no parity between men and women, ethics will disappear. For Irigaray a true marriage can happen only if the partners have their freedom. She argues: "Love is accomplished by two, without dividing the roles between the beloved and the lover, between objectival or animal passivity on the one hand and generally conscious and valorous activity on the other. Woman and man remain two in love. Watching over and creating the universe is their primary task and it remains so" (Irigaray, 1996: 138). In this poem Forough argues that marriage as a 'prison' represents a state of domestic and sexual subordination and ownership. She as a captive bird attempts to leave the cage of traditional customs, but she is not sure of her path, and finds herself subject to blame and criticism. Like Irigaray, Forough has her doubts that a true marriage can exist because the circumstances of equivalence between the sexes have not been met yet. For this reason, Forough continues in her poem that if her "jailer" wishes to free her, she feels empty and without the breath or energy required to embrace this freedom. For Forough, in the same way as for Irigaray, the irreducibility of the other and sensible transcendence did not take place. Irigaray states that: "transcendence unveils itself in the other who is here present to me, but irreducible to my rational perception" (Irigaray, 2001: 93). Forough writes:

I am thinking these things, yet I know
that I cannot, dare not leave this prison.
even if the jailer would wish it,
no breath or breeze remains for my flight.
from behind the bars, every bright morning
the look of a child smile in my face;
when I begin a song of joy,
his lips come toward me with a kiss.
O sky, if I want one day
to fly from this silent prison,

what shall I say to the weeping child's eyes:

forget about me, for I am captive bird?

(Translated by Hillmann, 1990: 158)

Forough has no desire to leave this confused woman in this space where she is defenceless, in the realm of masculine subjectivity. Irigaray, in this case, suggests relying upon symbolisation. Whilst the masculine subject's subjectivity has symbolic reference points to assist him, "the other" could create her own, new symbolic reference point. Irigaray's concept of the transcendental could assist this other being to accomplish a sort of symbolic function. This notion unites mind with body while simultaneously preserving the tension of "the other", and creates an independent concept for each being. Therefore, it delivers a productive locus for changes to the symbolic order. Forough suggests this locus in the last lines of the poem: "O sky, if I want one day / to fly from this silent prison". Similar to Irigaray, Forough challenges the monolithic discourse of the "same". In her last line, "forget about me, for I am a captive bird", not only does she provide an acknowledgement of the duality of subjects and criticism of the monolithic nature of masculine culture by applying the technique of mimesis, she also provides a valuable means for helping women to accept their space, body and self by the notion of the sensible transcendental. Forough desperately desires that her own being may be discovered, by herself, who is currently imprisoned. Irigaray has also proposed the existence of this locus by simply asking this question: "Can she alone feel the music of the air trembling between the wings of the angels, and make or remake a body from it?" (Irigaray, 1991: 176).

In other words, Forough realises that the subject "I" voiced by a female body does not exist, and similar to Irigaray refers to the necessity of recapturing the female body to endorse female sensible transcendence. Irigaray argues:

We lack, we women with a sex of our own, a God in which to share, a word/language to share and to become. Defined as the often obscure, not to say hidden, mother-substance of the word/language of men, we lack our subject, our noun, our verb, our predicates: our elementary sentence, our basic rhythm, our morphological identity, our generic incarnation, our genealogy.
(Cited in Whitford, 1991: 141)

Irigaray believes that "to attain another subjectivity, another alterity, another community, more real, concrete and human", it is necessary to uphold the transcendence between sexed subjects (Irigaray, 1996: 144). Likewise, Forough proposes to reconsider

and to enounce a female voice that is bonded with her inner self and the other, by realising this notion of the sensible transcendental.

Forough's frequent use of the subject 'I' and the pronoun 'me' in this poem uncovers the absence of a female subject position and the lack of sexual difference in Iranian culture and discourse. If we read her through Irigaray, Forough implies that the sexed subject has been prevented from engaging in discourse. In her essay on Descartes' theory of the subject, Irigaray discusses how Western philosophy restricts the subject, who must detach from rational objects and spaces. She also condemns Descartes for his restriction of the world's complexity to vision of a man. Irigaray decontextualises Descartes quotation from the Fifth Discourse of Descartes Optics: "And If, Taking the Eye of a Man Recently Dead,..." Irigaray exposes the exclusion of the feminine subject from Western philosophical discourse. Irigaray presents the 'eye' or vision, and the subject 'I' or the independent, neutral subject (Irigaray, 1985: 180). In later years Irigaray argued that the "sexed I" could be another "instrument of translation" through which diversified cultures and discourses can be accumulated (Irigaray, 2002: 6). Irigaray puts this theory in practice in her *To Be Two* and develops a new discourse of sexed subjectivity for men and women (Irigaray et al., 2000: 20-26). Forough, in a similar way, by reflecting multiple 'sexed I and me' questions, investigates her readers' rationality and at the same time the structures of the Persian language through which the sexed subject is formed. By doing this Forough demonstrates that language is deeply connected to a physical and psychic understanding of sexual difference. In other words, Forough's personal visual and verbal language shows that poetry is not always a manifestation of universal signs and beliefs. She attempts to show that poetry can reflect different aspects of aesthetic and emotional forms by articulating the sexed poet and sexed spaces. Forough finishes her poem in an intense decisive voice:

I am that candle which illumines ruins
With the burning of her heart.
If I want to choose silent darkness,
I will bring a nest to ruin.

(Translated by Hillmann, 1990: 158)

Most of the poems in Forough's first collection depict unsuccessful marriages, which are not merely a result of mistreatment between partners. In the line just quoted, Forough introduces the female persona as a candle that lights up the breakdowns of her marriage. She has gained self-awareness or, as Irigaray states, a subject of enunciation

as a woman. With such an intense and defined voice in the last lines, Forough provides evidence of “*parler femme*”, like Irigaray. In order to adopt the speaking subjectivity in this poem, Forough has first acknowledged the debt to the maternal and then she separates the female subject from her confusion by providing a language that is like a “shelter” for awakening her enunciation, or as Irigaray calls it, the woman’s “becoming” (Irigaray, 1985: 45-48). Forough starts her poetry with the possibility that the female persona “might fly from this silent prison” and she dares to do so, but at the end of the poem her voice becomes decisive and she attains self-enunciation. It is also very interesting to point out that the poet’s name, Forough, carries a meaning, ‘eternal light’, and in many of her poems, such as the one above, she introduces her image as a light, here a candle.

Forough frequently challenges herself in her poetry to conquer the restrictions imposed under the codes of *sharm* (self-erasure) to conceal the voices of women and prevent their mobility. For example, in “Rebellion,” from the *Captive* collection, Forough wrote:

Don’t put the seal of silence on my lips
I have untold tales to tell
Take off the heavy chains from my foot
I am disturbed by all of this.
(Milani, 1992: 53)

Forough is not only disturbed by all these codes of *sharm*, she also exposes women’s censorship and suppression in both the private and public spaces. Similar to Zhale, she revolts against the limitations allocated to women in marriage. The poem can be considered as Forough’s struggle between her integrity as a poet, her freedom of poetic expression, and her role in the family. The poetic persona rebels against all the limitations imposed on her and she argues for breaking her silence. She addresses her husband directly and states her demand that is repeated several times in her previous poems, to take off the chains.

In “Wedding Band”, from her first collection, Forough indicates women’s lack of authority in their own lives, arguing that this is the main reason for their submissiveness, struggle and pain:

With a smile,
The little girl asked:
“What is the secret of this wedding band

Circling me tightly on my hand?"
 Years later, one night
 A sad wife gazed at the golden band,
 And saw in its glowing design
 Wasted days, wasted
 In the hope of a husband's loving hand.
 Anguished, she cried
 Out loud. She said:
 "This luminous and glowing band
 Is the band of tyranny and demands."
 (Milani, 1992: 194-195)

In this poem, the wedding band is the symbol of a contract to become a captive, and obedient to the masculine world. She is hopeless and she feels her life has been wasted. To borrow from Irigaray, touching continues to be touching as long as it does not capture or overpower the other's subject autonomy (Irigaray, 2004: 75). The poetic persona feels touch is lacking in her relationship, therefore reacts in a violent expression in the form of hopelessness, anguish and crying. Irigaray argues that lack of respect for the identity and subjectivity of the other "amounts to a kind of murder: a spiritual murder, the most serious murder and also the most serious suicide" (cited in Howai and Jobling, 2009: 15).

Breaking Codes of *Sharm* (self-erasure)

Forough's second collection, *Divar (The Wall)*, was published in July 1956 when Forough left Iran for the first time on a nine-month trip to Europe. The twenty-five poems in this volume are mostly dedicated to her former husband in memory of their shared love in the past. The collection reveals themes of moments of love, a lover's complaints and ambitious thoughts of love. The poems also advocate women's rights and rebel against women's oppression in the public domain. Forough's poetry conveys her commitment to the free verse of other modern poets of the period, but the classic tone of the Persian language along with its metaphors and themes still resonates in her writing.

The collection begins with the poem "The Sin" ("*Gonah*"), which can be called the point where Forough for the first time in the literary history of Iran breaks the taboos of the distinguished moral conventions of *sharm* (self-erasure). From "The Sin"

onwards, Forough searches for ways of providing recognition of the female subject. In other words, Forough decreases her questioning and condemnation of the 'theoretical machinery' and instead starts to define and shape a second subject. This poem in an Irigarayan reading can be suggested as a critical response to the idylls of the lyric poet Hafez, whose work is often referred to as an ideal portrayal of Persian love. Forough, by applying the technique of mimesis in her poem, reverses the places of the classical beloved and lover. It is the woman in her poem who approaches the man's body and portrays her own 'sin' with poetic ecstasy:

Beside a body, tremulous and dazed
 I sinned, I voluptuously sinned.
 O God! How could I know what I did
 in that dark retreat of silence?
 In that dark retreat of silence
 I looked into his mysterious eyes
 my heart trembled restlessly
 at the pleading in his eyes.
 In that dark retreat of silence
 I sat, dishevelled, beside him
 passions poured from his lips into mine
 saved I was from the agony of a foolish heart.
 I whispered the tale of love in his ears:
 I want you, O sweetheart of mine
 I want you, O life-giving bosom
 I want you, O mad lover of mine.
 Passion struck a flame in his eyes
 the red wine danced in the glass
 In the soft bed, my body
 shivered drunk on his breast.
 I sinned, I voluptuously sinned
 in arms hot and fiery
 I sinned in his arms
 iron-strong, hot, and avenging.
 (Milani, 1992a: 143)

In this poem, as Michael Hillman explains, Forough animates men's and women's individual relationships. She writes about a mutual love and passion and simultaneously rebels against the dominant norms or codes of *sharm* (self-erasure) that require women not to express their sexual desire and relationships openly. She expresses her sexual desire in the poem. Forough introduces new visions for instituting a substantial world where men and women could share their world equally, without either being reduced to the 'other'. In other words, Forough demonstrates the essential thing that women should consider in their writing: the opportunity for women to independently exist. In *Sharing the World* Irigaray argues that "the essential task that we have to carry out in our times is: how to coexist in respect for difference(s)? To what common horizon could we bend the diversities that have appeared to us – between nations, traditions, cultures, but also between generations, between sexes?" (Irigaray, 2008: 69). Women's lack of subjectivity and not having their own space, according to Irigaray, are mainly because of a lack of sensitivity to their desires (Irigaray, 1996: 4-5). Forough, similarly to Irigaray, prepares a space, a sexual morphology, between the poetic persona and the beloved where she can fulfil her desire through entering into dialogue. Forough's resisting voice in this collection becomes a stronger call for all women in the public domain to revolt and retaliate. For example, in the poem "To My Sister", Forough advises women not to live in the position of "an object of pleasure" or as the "married wife" of an old married man. She rebels against the law of temporary marriage and encourages women to wake up and start a fresh life, without being oppressed or disgraced:

Seek your rights, Sister,
from those who keep you weak,
from those whose myriad tricks and schemes
keep you seated in a corner of the house.

How long will you be the object of pleasure
In the harem of men's lust?
how long will you bow your proud head at his feet
like a benighted servant?

How long for the sake of a morsel of bread,
will you keep becoming an aged haji's temporary wife,

seeing second and third rival wives.
 oppression and cruelty, my sister, for how long?

This angry moan of yours
 must become a clamorous scream.
 you must tear apart this heavy bond
 so that your life might be free.

Rise up and uproot the roots of oppression.
 give comfort to your bleeding heart.
 for the sake of your freedom, strive
 to change the law, rise up.

(Translated by Vakili, 2011: XV)

Rebellion and the Concept of God and Religion

In her third collection, *Esyān (Rebellion)*, which consists of 17 poems, published in 1958, Forough expresses her extreme feelings of anger on topics such as religion, tradition and social expectations. The laws applied to women and their role in their community in this period were believed to have been approved by God (Nashat, 1983: 11). Beckett argues that in the *Esyān* volume, “the persona is more conscious of her limited status as a woman in a male-oriented society” (Beckett, 2009:33). In “Divine Rebellion” (“*Esyān-e khoda*”), the persona fantasises what she would have done if she were God:

If I were God, I’d call on the angels one night
 to release the round sun into the darkness’s furnace,
 angrily command the world garden servants
 to prune the yellow leaf moon from the night’s branch.

(Translated by Wolpe, 2010: liii-liv)

This persona, after bringing chaos to heaven and earth, would let the souls of the dead have another chance of living, she continues:

Tired of being a prude, I’d seek Satan’s bed at midnight
 And find refuge in the declivity of breaking laws.
 I’d happily exchange the golden crown of divinity
 For the dark, aching embrace of a sin.

(ibid)

The poem is a response to blind submission to traditional moral conventions that require women to observe *sharm* (self-erasure). In other words, Forough attempts to protest against feminine sexual passivity by wishing a sexual union with the Devil himself and embracing sin. For Forough, the elimination of traditional beliefs embodies a symbolic denial of God, since the authority of all the conventions is connected to Him. Likewise, the feminine quest for love is symbolised by her union with the Devil. “Sexuate difference” in Irigaray’s thought relates to her conception of the divine. She contends that the discourse misperceives difference, especially sexuate difference, by postulating a masculine culture and a God that is alienated from human experience. In this culture, the other, the ‘feminine’, operates as an ideal to secure masculine subjectivity. According to Irigaray, the difference is not elaborated between sexed subjects, but it is only a “marker of greater or lesser proximity” to the divine (Irigaray, 2004: 174). Female subjectivity, for Irigaray, in this masculine divine, will continue to be unattainable and the other will remain unrecognised. In this poem Forough reconceptualises religion (God) to prepare the ground for the existence of the female subject. For Forough, similar to Irigaray, conceiving of female subjectivity is connected to her poetic persona becoming God. To accomplish the female subjectivity of the poetic persona Forough wishes for a female God who exposes the perspective of a transfiguration of a female body. Irigaray states: “Without a God [women] find themselves squeezed into models which don’t suit them, which exile them, cut them up inside, taking away their progress in love, art, thought, her/their ideal and divine achievement” (Irigaray, 1985: 76). The poetic persona in this poem attains her own passage to the spiritual realm. In order to do this, she positions herself in God’s place and then stresses her subjectivity by her union with the Devil, to cultivate a feminine desire of otherness.

In short, Forough symbolically excludes the masculine position of God so that female subjectivity and desire of love becomes a necessity. To escape this masculine hierarchal structure between the sexes, Forough, similar to Irigaray, calls for the existence of a female divine in the natural realm in order for female autonomy to exist. The poetic persona in Forough’s poem must enunciate the qualities of a feminine divine if she is to acquire her subjectivity and become an autonomous woman. It is interesting to note that Forough’s poetry was suppressed by the Islamic state for almost 34 years, as the content of the first two collections was considered to be against the cultural

conventions of *sharm*. However, in February 2016, her work was discussed for the first time by a literary panel on Iranian national TV. This was after a visit made by Iranian writers and directors to Ayatollah Khamenei at the hospital on National Cinema Day 9/12/2014 and the Supreme Leader's positive view of Forough's later work compared to her first three collections. This approval of Forough's work gave many critics and writers the courage to stop being quiet and to bring the poet's work into the public eye. It was discussed in this panel that Forough's work should not be concealed from the public eye since her last collections show the poet's repentance from her past, which is a lesson, especially to women. Despite this view, and borrowing from Irigaray, it can be suggested that the poet's break from her previous collections' way of writing had been done intentionally, not to repent from her way of thinking but to stress and give autonomy to the female subject. In other words, Forough was in search of her freedom by breaking the prison and the walls of her captivity in her first collections, but found herself in a larger prison.

Style and Embodying Language

The style of poetry had less importance for Forough in her first three collections, which were produced in lyrical lines composed of couplets. However, this changed in her later collections such as *Tavallodi Digar (Another Birth)*, published in 1964) and *Iman Beyavim be Aghaz-e Fasl-e Sard (Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season)*, published in 1974). Choosing a style of poetry writing becomes important to her. In addition, many poems in Forough's last collections have predictive insights into her death and the future events of the country in the late twentieth century. For example, she shows depressing images of landscapes, painful bodies and dreadful silences. In these poems, the women seem submissive and the men are unsympathetic. Forough also believed her first collections were based more on her instincts (Farrokhzad, 1964: 164). They are mostly about Forough's own feelings and pain, but in her next collections she also composes philosophical, social, folklore and everyday life poems. *Another Birth*, her fourth collection, is composed of 35 poems, all of which except four are in free verse. The use of this style offered Forough a powerful freedom of expression which was lacking in her earlier, more conventional collections. For example, "The Wind-up Doll" from *Another Birth* (1962) and "I Feel Sorry for the Garden" from *Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season* (1963), both demonstrate her understanding of self in relation to society. She assesses her society in her last collections and at the same time

opposes herself to it. In her poems “Only the Sound That Remains” and “Conquest of the Garden” she shows her distressed feelings and negative sides of society, and how these aspects have their influence on herself as well as other people. In “I Feel Sorry for the Garden” Forough symbolically represents five categories of people in her society who are the members of her family. She talks about a rich sister of the poetic persona who once had fruitful dreams, but they are all replaced with artificial ones after her marriage:

and in the security of her artificial husband's love,
and under the branches of artificial apple trees,
she sings artificial songs
and produces real babies.
Whenever she comes to visit us
and the hem of her skirt gets
soiled with the garden's poverty,
she takes a perfume bath.
Every time she comes to visit us,
she is pregnant.

(Translated by Michael Hillmann, 1990, 121)

The sister is fearful and her only concern is not becoming dirtied by the “poverty” in the garden with which she had once been entangled. Although she is rich, the social expectations of her identity have not changed and she still has to submit to the defined roles for women in her society, and become a mother.

Forough's five collections demonstrate a movement from her personal experience to a context of a larger social struggle. Mahmud Kianush states that Forough, “instead of being the voice of her individual world, became conscious of the great common spirit of mankind” (Kianush, 1996: 32). For example, in her poem, “One Like No Other” (1966), she imagines the arrival of a rescuer who is a man and who will observe justice and share fairly the food among the people. However, the poet has sarcastically complied with the ‘committed literature’ notion and identifies this “someone” as a male person:

Someone's coming, I dreamed
Dreaming of a red star
Someone's coming [...]
Someone who can't be arrested and

Handcuffed and thrown in jail [...]

someone is coming

someone better,

someone who is like no one[.]

(Translated by Michael Hillmann, p: 66-67).

The submissive roles of women in her last collections are all decided consciously by Forough. She reflects the stereotypical view of masculine and feminine roles, one who projects and the other who is projected. The poetic diction, such as someone who is “better”, “taller”, “braver”, and lines such as “[someone who] can’t be arrested and / Handcuffed and thrown in jail”, and someone who is able to deliver justice, are all tools that Forough uses to remind her reader of the existence of a locus for the sensible transcendent. The poem also ironically celebrates a call for the feminine divine to give autonomy to the female subject: “and he’s able to make the neon sign of ‘Allah’ / or / and his face is more radiant than the face of the Twelfth Imam”. In other words, Forough, similar to Irigaray, exercises the technique of masquerade to correspond to women’s desire in a masculine world. Irigaray argues: “masquerade has to be understood as what women do in order to recuperate some element of desire, to participate in man’s desire, but at the price of renouncing their own” (Irigaray, 1985: 133-134). Forough participates in man’s desire in her poems and dreams of a masculine saviour who will bring light and justice to their world. Forough has to enter into the ‘masquerade of femininity’ to renounce her female desire. She enters into a system of values that belongs to the masculine and not to her. She criticises society’s desire by objectifying herself as a spectacle in a male fantasy. Irigaray states that “in this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity” (Irigaray, 1985: 84). When Forough masquerades, her poetic persona renounces her significance as the subject of speech and therefore she becomes the very image of femininity, in order to reduce the subjectivity gap and to attract the male gaze. The strong mocking tone of Forough’s poem is evident in its last line, as the potent saviour of conventional poets is collapsed by a literary mockery of phallic desire: “and distributes whatever does not sell / and gives us our share / I dream...”. Seeking for a saviour becomes a frequent theme in Farrokhzad’s later poems.

Forough’s early poems represent men and woman tied by traditional gender roles. In these poems, the female persona is alienated from her own self by the social limitations placed upon her. At the same time, the masculine persona is also restrained

by his desire to control and dominate. He is unaware of sentimental attachments (between the feminine and masculine). However, Forough also intensely desires masculine companionship and love in these collections. For example, from her *Captive* collection, in “*Koshteh*” (“Slain”) the female persona states:

You, with a sincere heart, woman
 Don't seek loyalty in a man
 He does not know the meaning of love
 Don't ever tell him your heart's secrets[.]

(Translated by Milani, 1992: 145)

The masculine character in Forough's early collections is led by his physical desire; he desires only the bodily aspect of love and ignores the woman's emotional needs. For example, in “*Afsaneh-ye Talkh*” (“Bitter Myth”), the female persona portrays men in the following terms:

He was taught nothing but desire
 Interested in nothing but appearances
 Wherever he went, they whispered in his ears
 Woman is created for your desire.

(ibid: 140)

Forough's first collections contain many such examples of blemished and faulty relationships in which she depicts herself as a captive bird caged by a jailor. In these collections Forough denounces the selves of both men and women that have lost their transcendent place. This awakening moment for the poet, although it is bitter, prepares her for a re-examining of the ideas of desire, sexuality and relationships. Therefore, in her later collections, Forough is determined to explore the relations that would be irreducible and she condemns her past realisation of relations in her earlier collections. The male and female personas in the last two collections have mutual interests and responsible commitments, rather than each following his or her own desire. In other words, they have transcended their perception of love and desire from selfish and physical to selfless experience.

Forough's poetry becomes more structured and modern in her last two collections. Writing about the body is no longer expressed by reducible positions in her new collections; instead her poetic diction is designated by a careful selection of words, metaphors and similes. Form becomes more important for Forough, and this makes it possible for her to bring new details into her language. Her poetic choice of words, e.g.

in “Another Birth”, is brave and liberating. The poet’s concern for form and content as well as her careful awareness of the language in her modern poems is an example of the diversity that Irigaray explores in literature, which she identifies as the essence of “*parler femme*” or “*écriture féminine*”. As Forough freed herself from ‘committed literature’ expectations, she became less disturbed and more stress-free in her expression of language relating to the body. Forough’s voice in the following lines from her *Another Birth* collection could be read in this pattern:

I know a sad little fairy
Who lives in an ocean
and ever so softly plays her heart into a magic flute
who dies with one kiss each night
and is reborn with one kiss each dawn.

(Translated by Michael Hillmann, 1990, 168)

Some critics, such as Hillmann, have discussed the poem from the perspective of Forough’s biography. Hillmann believes that:

It may [...] be difficult for a reader to appreciate fully [the above-cited lines] without knowing that [Forough’s] employer and lover, Golestan, may have spent much time at the house he put at Farokhzad’s disposal but presumably went back to his own nearby home at night, leaving the poet alone to await a kiss in the morning. (Hillmann, 1990: 40)

Although the poem might implicitly address Forough’s relationship with her lover, the meaning of her poem should not be reduced to a biographical interpretation. In this poem, Forough destroys the walls of the persona’s confined *Sharm* (self-erasure) and confesses her honest feelings about her relationship with her lover. Karimi-Hakkak comments of *Another Birth*: “In these poems, the personal, confessional, felt element is successfully grafted to an overriding sense of social awareness. The result is a poignant, irresistible blaze of genuine poetry, at once private and public, in which the poet’s unmarred fidelity to experience makes an immediate, ultimate effect” (Karimi-Hakkak, 1978: 137). Forough’s exposed “confession” of the persona’s private experience (kissing and love) in this poem is a demonstration of her opposition to social and political norms. Borrowing from Irigaray, Forough portrays how women must acknowledge and stress their realm of ‘*jouissance*’ if they wish to destabilise phallogentric domination in its origin. She shows her sheer, unrepressed pleasure in celebrating female sexuality and female subjectivity. Forough makes use of a discourse

that articulates more precisely women's experience of *jouissance*. Finally, Forough explains her womanly experience of desire to her readers:

Poetry is the language of the heart and I am a woman, and my heart and it's [sic] emotions are different from the emotions that exist in the heart of a man. Consequently, if I want to speak with the voice of a man, for sure I will not be speaking from my own heart.
(Farrokhzad, in Hillmann, 1987: 29)

Conclusion

Exploring Forough's five collections suggests that, although her technique altered over twelve years, her perception of self as a woman and a female subject strengthened and infused throughout her writing. She faced different views and tensions from critics which caused her alienation from society. Her isolation from society continued almost through her entire work, but her poems suggest that the society's impact on her perception of female self altered, especially in her last collections. Forough's first collection of poems introduced a new feminine and autobiographical voice in the 1950s that was distinctive and controversial in Iranian literary discourse. For the first time in Iranian literary history, the chance was provided for Forough to candidly publish her challenging poetry, which was a shocking and brave act for an Iranian female poet, in comparison to Parvin and Zhale's time. In a world where women are imagined to shield their private lives as sincerely as their honour, where restriction and the self-censorship that comes along with it are considered the norm, the emergence of a female poet writing about herself and her sexuality, and using innovative language to do so, was inevitably controversial and extraordinary.

Her first three collections concentrate on her critical individual female voice, in a manner similar to Irigaray's work. The poems from these three collections suggest that the female persona is in search of her identity, but the poems bestow meaning to her existence as a liberated subject. In these poems, the female persona Forough portrays is an isolated woman, free from the roles of mother, wife or daughter. She is certain to challenge the defined red lines of her society's beliefs regarding *sharm* and to display her pain. Milani argues that:

Throughout Farrokhzad's poetry we witness the development of a female persona whose complexity defies the stereotype: a woman privileged with emotional, psychological, and intellectual awareness, a woman contradicting prevailing notions of the 'feminine,' and asserting, with however much awe and confusion,

her sense of her self as different from that conventionally defined as belonging to the woman. (Milani, 1982: 143)

However, in her last two collections Forough indicates a move and rearrangement of her perception of self-enunciation and her attachment to society. Like Irigaray, not only does she maintain a critical voice, as in her previous collections, but also her concerns become much wider. Forough's poetry in her first three collections is focused on social circumstances that had a direct impact on her own life experience and she usually does not specify them. For example, the poetic persona in "The Captive" is introduced as a jailed bird and talks about a child who needs his mother for his peace. The reader realises that her imprisonment and separation from her son is because of the social expectations of her as a mother and a married woman. In these collections, by criticising existing social views, Forough breaks the expectations of *sharm* defined for women and she embodies a space for '*parler femme*'. However, in her last two collections, Forough concentrates on the causes and origins of these discouraging qualities of society, and how they can have an impact on other people as well as on her own life. Mahmud Kianush argues that, in Forough's last two collections, "instead of standing against society, she tried to understand it; instead of being the voice of her individual world, she became conscious of the great common spirit of mankind" (Kianush, 1996: 32). This view, while acknowledging the struggle Forough was facing in encountering social expectations against her outraged poetic persona, ignores the recent view of her last collections in Iran that sees the poet's salvation and repentance from her past.

The poet's last two collections are a continuation of the primary desire of her first three collections, which is to give women voice and freedom of expression. In *Another Birth*, Forough recognises that she is no longer the voice of her private world alone. Her orientation towards external elements becomes apparent at this point.

I have discussed how Forough's last two collections of poems address both individual and social concerns. The poet moves from a self-experienced writing of a feminine persona to writing about the concerns of all human beings. From this point, she is not a voice only for women, but a voice for all people. Writing about Forough's last collection, Hillmann states that:

Farrokhzâd's poetic personae no longer seem to represent merely her autobiographical self in the expression of feelings and views, but rather all Iranians with similar feelings. In other words, her feminine personae are transformed in these poems into a

spokesperson, female to be sure, but voicing an anti-patriarchal clarion call that knows no gender. (Hillmann, 1987: 99)

Forough's poems not only confront and oppose the male-controlled discourse and break the code of *sharm* by expressing women's private feelings and oppression, but also provide a space in which to confront the discourse that appropriates the transcendence projected by only one subject, the masculine. Forough's poetry celebrates the existence of two subjects, each one irreducible to the other, and through this gesture, each subject projects only what he or she is. Her poetry is separated from the discourse that is imposed on her and she finds a discourse of her own, as well as a way of sharing and coexisting with the transcendence of the other that is irreducible to her own.

Forough's attraction diverted from the self to 'the other' in her last collections, and she was able to build a "threshold with the intention of meeting the other" (Irigaray, 2008:9). In other words, she cultivated the space between her and the other in her last collections, and this safeguarded border between the two sexes made it possible to open out onto new horizons. Irigaray states that "on the borders of our own dwelling, thresholds will prepare a meeting with the other: thresholds on the horizon of a world, allowing us to leave it and to welcome the other, thresholds also on the border of oneself, if it is possible to distinguish between the two" (ibid). For Forough, similar to Irigaray, without recognising the space between the self and the other, entering into relations proves to be impossible. This is an important step for Forough to understand the source of her challenges, to break into the discourse and codes of *sharm* and reformulate them, along with the existing norms and reactions of her monosubjective culture. Forough's dialogue with Iranian society takes on significant importance in her last two collections and the themes of social ignorance in her first three collections evolve into her sense of self enunciation as a woman. Therefore, the distinction between her social poems and her individual poems can be dismissed. Instead, Forough's morphology, in particular words related to her sexual feelings in her first collections, allows her to touch and be in a relation with the world and discourse that was not touched before and was totally ignored. The self-affection from her morphology, her private feelings of love and sexuality, offer Forough an autonomy, a capacity of gaining her individuality that is irreducible to the other. In other words, Forough is in search of ways of recognising the female subject, a search that is in conjunction with Irigaray's second phase of work. Forough defines a second subject according to Irigaray's second

phase of work, and to some extent goes even further in her last two collections, to define a relationship and an ethic between two different subjects.

Finally, it is possible to suggest that Forough portrays perfectly the phases of the conceptual and psychological development of a woman, as also depicted in Irigaray's work. Her poetry was produced in a period in which discourse was immersed in masculine values. Studying Forough's poetry with the perception that many of its poetic personas, approaches and themes mirror the life of a woman, allows the reader to better comprehend and appreciate the phases Forough experienced in her poetic evolution. During the twelve short years of her literary career, Forough experienced a transformation. In short, poetry for Forough was "a life-time devotion" (Beckett et al., 2009: 37) and her five collections each have an individual purpose. While in *The Captive* she is an upset and disturbed woman, strictly incomplete in both experience and growth, in *The Wall* and *Rebellion* she is a rebellious and critical woman, while in *Another Birth* she is finally liberated from her earlier sense of oppression and seclusion, and she tries to share the world with the other. These three phases of "feminine", "feminist", and "female" poetry comply with a reading of Irigaray's work in three phases, of being a critique, defining a female subject and finally defining an ethical relationship between two subjects. These phases not only define Forough's progress as a poet and as a woman, they also help challenge the union between the sexes beyond any established representation and deconstruct existing masculine values.

In the next chapter it will be examined how the works of post-revolutionary Iranian women poets frequently display an incredible sensitivity towards women's issues and gender relations. I will also assess how the themes women writers of this period use appear to challenge gender hierarchies, and express women's experience and the suffering within their social context. It will be analysed how the committed poets faced difficulties and how they were often silent and withheld their voices from the authorities, to assure publication and prevent attacks from the authorities. The emergence of literature concerning the Cultural Revolution²⁸ (*Engelab-e Farhangi*) restrained the literary work of the pre-revolutionary committed writers and created a new episode in literary writing, which saw the application of distinct religious themes. Analysis of the selected poems will show how the rise of the female voice and feminist

²⁸ The Cultural Revolution (1980–1983) was a period following the Iranian Revolution, when the academia of Iran was closed to eliminate Western and non-Islamic influences in order to bring it in line with the revolutionary and Political Islam (Mojab, 2004).

consciousness emerged through the presence of many young poets who grew up after the Revolution and who had been in direct interaction with gender relations in their society. It will also be demonstrated how their medium of activities changed, due to censorship problems, by moving out of the country to overcome this censorship.

Although there are many female poets in this period, the poetry of Tahereh Saffarzadeh, Simin Behbahani and Granaz Moussavi will be analysed thoroughly in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Irigarayan Theory and Practice in the Poetry of the Post-Revolutionary Period (1979-2016)

Introduction

Gender-related themes began to be highlighted in women's literary discourse during the post-revolutionary movement. The themes, forms, types of characters and discursive contexts that shaped women's literature after the Revolution have already been indicated. For instance, an important theme was how compulsory veiling and the laws regarding sharm affected the literature of Iranian women writers after the Revolution. The controversial veil was a dominant theme in most women's writings before but especially after the Revolution. It can be argued that the veil was the focus of poets' critical inquiry in all three periods, and the source of their literary quasi-invisibility.

During the post-revolutionary period women writers challenged gender hierarchies, and expressed the experiences of women and their suffering within their social context. Such themes were expressed in metaphorical language in order to transcend the existing patriarchal literary discourses. Censorship is evident in the published works and almost impossible not to take into account during this time. Despite this, female authors especially have found ways to escape the restrictive rules in recent years by targeting their readership via the digital world. Digital alternatives, such as blogs, online ebooks, Telegram and Facebook, have provided authors a platform free from the censorship of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

After the 1979 revolution, the emergence of literature concerning the Islamic revolution, under the name of Cultural Revolution Literature (*Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Farhangi*) restrained the literary work of pre-revolutionary politically committed writers. This circumstance created a new episode in Iranian literature, with the appearance of distinct religious themes. The Islamic writers supported the state ideology and their view of the events of the revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and pre-revolutionary history was very spiritual. By applying religious themes in their works, they attempted to promote religiosity. Islamic literature borrowed some of its themes, such as fighting against Western ideologies and for justice, freedom and devotion, from the pre-revolutionary committed literature. Islamic writers called on their community for loyalty, devotion and faithfulness to their religious ideologies, fighting against their enemies such as Iraq and the West. They inserted religious themes such as *Karbala* and

Ashura into their poems when illustrating the war between Iraq and Iran. During this war, which lasted almost a decade, gender issues in women's writings were postponed and, instead, their themes focused more on the war. Fatemeh Rakei, Sepideh Kashani and Tahereh Saffarzadeh are among the writers who focused mainly on Islamic topics and the war at this time. Simin Behbahani also wrote similar poems during this period after the revolution.

However, after the war and especially during Khatami's presidency, women writers gradually began to criticise the regime's treatment of women's issues. This began with protests and resistance to the law of compulsory veiling. Insisting on their rights, they continued to confront the authorities in their writings, press releases and social activities. These authors formed their own metaphorical language, themes, and symbols, in new ways, to confront the patriarchal committed literature and increase their organised presence. Amongst the post-revolutionary writers, the presence of a younger generation of women writers and poets who grew up after the revolution is noticeable. Some enrolled in this movement of established writers to represent the traditional characteristics of Iranian culture. Although the numbers of young poets are outstanding, for the purposes of this thesis, only the poetry of Granaz Moussavi will be considered from this group.

This chapter will show how an analysis of post-revolutionary poetry reveals new imageries, themes, genres and structures, reflecting the women's movement after the Revolution. More specifically, the chapter shows how the poems express sexual desire regarding notions of visibility and invisibility (veiling), and how they modify male mythologies from a female point of view. It will also demonstrate how the selected poets revised the traditional, pre-revolutionary literary themes. The chapter focuses on the poetry of Tahereh Saffarzadeh, Simin Behbahani and Granaz Moussavi, and documents a shift in their discourse from traditional Islamic themes as mothers, wives, protectors of the Revolution, warriors and martyrs, to more gender equality themes in the three decades after the Revolution.

In this search for the cultural meanings of contemporary Iranian women's poetry, Irigaray's transcendental theories of the duality of subjectivity, the masculine and feminine, and the culture of dialogic exchange between different subjects, will once again inform the reading of the selected poems. It will then be explored how these poets transform the poetic line to represent certain female experiences in their culture. Similar to other chapters, this will be analysed via Irigarayan modes of resistance. It will be

demonstrated that women poets of this period oppose the masculine authority over language and reverse the negative image of women, through literary strategies that can be understood in terms of Irigaray's resistant praxis.

The main aim of this chapter is to show that Iranian women's poetry in this period can be studied according Irigaray's three phases, and particularly in the third phase. These phases or continual shifts will show how the poets stress the importance of the need to replace the duality of subjects in sexual difference, with the singular masculine one. My analysis of post-revolutionary women's poetry will attempt to establish whether the female poets of this period, similar to the previous period's poets, seek to cultivate and embody the female subject and simultaneously return to 'the reality of two', and to what extent this struggle is defined in comparison to the past period. Moreover, I will explore whether they also try to focus on the manner in which the female subject relates to her other (the third phase). This chapter will identify that it is possible to charge Irigaray's third phase in the selected poet's work which is how to define an ethical relationship between two different subjects. The aim of such meditations is to find out in what manner two sexually different subjects can survive together. It is suggested in this thesis that this is more prevalent in the poetry of the active female poets in diaspora or the digital world, in which their poetry is not challenged by censorship. In other words, the aim is to show that these young poets concentrate on the elements required for sharing the culture of two and cultivating hospitality in between the two more explicitly, in comparison to female poets inside the country or the previous period's female poets.

These poems offer a transformation of words and metaphors into an intimate connection with their readers. My analysis will show how the selected poets offer a renovation and transformation of voices into poetry in the form of metaphors and words. Their images allow the other (the reader or listener) to receive the undisclosed messages of Iranian women's poetry in a culture in which the masculine perspective is dominant. In other words, my analysis will show how these poets seek to invite their readers to a process of rediscovery. Readers are involved in a dialogic exercise between the poets' images and meanings that welcome other interpretations. My interpretations take into account Irigaray's thoughts on cultivating a feminine culture and a dialogic exchange with the other. Finally, the study of the feminine expression and voice in the selected poems will suggest the discovery of an Iranian feminine self-image, the "sensible transcendental" and a new subjectivity. Their intention is to reveal and

develop images and approaches in their poems and allow them to confront the symbolic order of a dominant masculine culture.

Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008)

Early Work

Tahereh Saffarzadeh is one of the most prominent Iranian female poets; her work falls into both the Pahlavi and post-revolutionary periods. In her early work, Tahereh challenges gender questions such as women's oppression and seclusion. Her first collection, *Rahgozar-e Mahtab (Moonlight Passer-by)* was published in the 1960s, which coincided with the publication of Forough's last collection before the latter's death in 1967. Tahereh was a politically active poet both before and after the 1979 revolution and her work is influenced by religion and politics as well as her own quest for individuality. Similar to Parvin and unlike Forough, Tahereh enjoyed the privilege of studying at university, and received her bachelor's degree in English language and literature in 1958. Like the previous female poets, she had a very short marriage and lost her first child before the birth. She left Iran for England and then moved to the United States and received her master's degree in creative writing from the University of Iowa. In 1969 a collection of fifteen poems, *Red Umbrella*, was published in English; she then returned to Iran and continued publishing her work, which included *Tanin Dar Delta (Resonance in the Bay)* in 1971 and *Sad Va Bazovan (The Dam and the Arms)* in 1972. She was silent for almost six years but she then published *Safar-e Panjom (The Fifth Journey)* in 1978. The collection had the largest print-run in the history of poetry in Iran (Milani, 1992: 159). Tahereh's poetry is a good example of literary reflection of socio-political change in Iran. She expresses the impact of socio-political transformations on women's identity and creativity. Tahereh's work can be divided into three distinct periods. Solitude, alienation, the search for autonomy, anger and confrontation with patriarchal social structures can be considered the common themes of the first period of her work. In her early poems Tahereh seeks to liberate herself from restrictive social codes and conventions. In her first collections, she undertakes a process of self-discovery; this ends with her trip to England and later to America. The poems of her first collection, *Moonlight Passer-by*, composed from 1956 to 1962, are mainly love lyrics in the *chaharpareh* (quatrain) form or Nimaic rhythms, focusing on the poet's experience of alienation and solitude. For example, the poem, "*Biganeh*" ("Stranger") from this collection follows this mode:

I am a pantheon of feelings,
 and I will not hold you – Snowdrift of lies –
 I fear you will turn to ice the memories I cherish,
 remember humanity.
 I am that lonely one who understands,
 the agony of loneliness,
 the silence of the tolerant,
 the wrath of the inflamed.
 But I never understand you,
 – all insouciance and silly cheer –
 [...]

I have no need for people
 My life companions are God and poetry
 You will never taste the freedom I taste
 As you join without a thought your destined peers,
 Loaded with Jewellery,
 Colored with deceit,
 Drained of human passion.
 Go marry the bride you have never met
 And follow in the footsteps of your countless ancestors.
 (Translated by Milani, 1992: 160)

The image that Tahereh is sharing through this poem is of the poetic persona's dilemma and dissatisfaction, to the point that she finds comfort and freedom only in companionship with God and poetry. She is lonely, separated from other people, and feels a stranger among them, but she finds God and poetry to be means of connecting with her inner self. In her later works, this connection becomes more evident, and Tahereh began to write poems on spiritual topics such as birth, death, love and injustice. In her early work Tahereh is openly present in the poems, and there is not much distance between her and the personas in the poems. She is not preserving her inner feelings and where she feels the necessity, she expresses them. In the last line of the quoted poem, the poetic persona blames the man's ancestors and questions the wedding traditions in her culture, since in religious families the groom would not be allowed to see the bride until the wedding.

The following poem, from *Motion and Yesterday (Harekat va Dirouz)*, further depicts her alienation, seclusion and discontent:

A lone tree I am
 in this far reaching desert
 on this snowfall plain
 I have no soul mate
 no one whose steps tread in unison with mine
 the friendly murmur of streams
 the happy rush of springs
 die in a space far away
 and my ear
 fills with parched strains of solitude
 in this desert
 I have terrifying companions;
 hail of pain, clouds of fear,
 and wild downpour of sorrows
 within me howls the clamor of
 wolves of loneliness.
 In this darkness of night
 my heart does not quicken
 with thoughts of tomorrow.

(Translated by Milani, 1992: 161)

Expressing feelings of loneliness and imperfection are common themes in Tahereh's early work. Milani suggests that "the author seeks freedom that slips through her [Tahereh's] cupped fingers. Alienation, fragmentation, and a search for autonomy are by far more forcefully realised here than is the ideal that the poet longs to compass" (Milani, 1992: 161). Similar to the previous female poets, in her early collections Tahereh challenges social codes and norms. According to Milani none of the female characters of the poems in the first collection feels "solaces of conformity or domesticity; instead they experience a dilemma in its crudest form" (ibid).

The second phase of Tahereh's work began when she left her job, losing her child and leaving Iran to continue her education in America at the University of Iowa. Her fifteen English poems in the collection *Red Umbrella*, published by Windhover Press, give the impression of her new style. Tahereh was the first Iranian female poet to

have a collection of her poems originally published in English. The poems challenge the masculine culture of her period. She shows her dislikes and expresses her isolation, anger and distinctiveness. The poems here are feminine, sensual and erotic, while questioning of Iranian patriarchal values. According to Tahereh's own words, her living experience in America, getting to know foreign poets and her interaction with other artists had a great influence on her thinking (Saffarzadeh, 1979: 131). The content of Tahereh's poems in this collection expresses the persona's eccentric experiences and desires more freely and without her feeling any restrictions from dominant cultural norms. This open, spontaneous space enabled the poet to expose her emotions and inner self without the need for conformity to social standards or moral codes. Similar to other female poets in the past, she challenges the concept of *sharm* (self-erasure) in her collection, and expressions of sensual and erotic themes are not concealed. However, this did not last long and her language and content changed after her return to Iran. It can be argued that the poet's being away from home, having a different type of audience and readers, as well as writing poems in English, detached her from the intolerance of the source language and its implicit restrictions that she adopted in her previous collections. She left the sense of captivity in her early poems and decided to attack society's injustice towards women. For example, in her poem "Invite me", Tahereh writes:

I am tired of all the big lunches
the big preparations
the big promises
remember, I am not the women out of Maugham's
Luncheon
I am the traveler
who has experienced the weight
of too much baggage
who only thinks of
a light snack
light stomach
light memory
invite me to a sandwich of love
serve me in your hands
wrap my body

in the warm paper
 of your breath
 at the table of this cold winter night.

(Saffarzadeh, 1969: 20)

Tahereh continues her defiant tone for some time after her return to Iran. Her poem “My Birthplace” (“*Zadgah*”), from the first part of her collection, *Tanin Dar Delta* (*Echo in Delta*), expresses the poet’s anger toward cultural discrimination in Iran. She illustrates the moment of a girl’s birth and the relation between mother and daughter. Tahereh condemns the mother’s silence and immobility and her failure to confront tradition:

I have not seen my birthplace
 where my mother deposited under a low ceiling
 the heavy load of her inside.
 It is still alive
 the first tick-tick of my small heart
 in the stove pipe
 and in the crevices between crumbling bricks.
 It is still alive in the door and walls of the room
 my mother’s look of shame
 at my father,
 at my grandfather,
 after a muffled voice announced,
 “It’s a girl!”
 The midwife cringed, fearing no tip
 for cutting the umbilical cord,
 knowing there’d be none
 for circumcision.
 On my first pilgrimage to my birthplace
 I will wash from the walls
 My mother’s look of shame[.]

(Translated by Milani, 1992: 164)

Tahereh presents the mother and the newly born girl as victims of patriarchal practices and values. Whereas the mother’s role is shown as passive and immobile, her persona’s voice is loud and critical. To show her resistance and opposing belief, the persona refuses and discards masculine supremacy and looks for a new identity distinct from her

mother's. Traditionally, families in Iran regarded having boys as more desirable. Some documents from the Achaemenid period show that mothers with baby boys were adored more compared to ones with girls. Midwives and medical practitioners were given more payment for delivering baby boys (Hamidpour, 2010: 48). Sedghi argues that women who gave birth to girls faced 'disappointment' and suppression in Iranian masculine culture:

Unless girls were born into well-to-do families, their birth was less enthusiastically welcomed. Among the less-privileged classes, the birth of a baby girl usually meant disappointment to the father and fear in the mother, who might face abandonment or punishment by her husband or his close relatives or her own father. (Sedghi, 2007:27)

Tahereh's poem illustrates these moments of suffering, the whispered and muffled voices, the depressed and shameful feelings. Its tone echoes the overpowering masculine culture. The persona in the poem does not merely express her grief at the injustice in her culture. She also has a critical voice that confronts discrimination. The figurative passage into the tradition here is not to authorise the past, but to invert the condition that makes women feel shame and suffering at the birth of a baby girl. Tahereh presents a female poetic persona who refuses to be in a similar status as her mother and who seeks her own equal importance and value. She challenges the relationship between mother and daughter in her poem and, similar to Irigaray, she is looking for a 'rehabilitation' of the relationship between mother and daughter, in order to recuperate the self. By reconstructing the normative practices of motherhood, Tahereh's poem provides awareness that helps re-imagine female consciousness and thereby begin intervention, aiding women in becoming subjects of resistance who can confront the dominant authorities.

In other words, the poet's strategic use of the relationship between the mother and daughter is a form of deconstruction of normative models of women's compliance to men's desire, and simultaneously a reforming attempt at establishing a new, liberated place for women in society. To challenge the relationship between the mother and daughter in this poem, the poet refers to a free and active woman who has the ability to choose her own path and future. This new meaning for the relationship is in opposition to the masculine characterisation of the relationship between mother and daughter. Tahereh's representation of this relationship grants autonomy to women and encourages them to take action and to reconstruct their own identity. Similar to Irigaray's mimesis

technique of resistance, Tahereh first illustrates the old and normative culture that shows the most desirable child for a woman is a boy, into whom, according to Irigaray, she shifts “all the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself” (Irigaray, 1985: 14). Women’s value according to this normative culture depends on giving birth to a male child. The poet shows how this masculine culture provides detailed descriptions of the mother-son relationship, but ignores the mother-daughter relationship. Irigaray argues that, unlike the son, the daughter is not recognised and privileged in her society and is “kept as a natural body good only for procreation” (Irigaray, 1993: 46). For Irigaray, for a girl to recognise her individuality and self-enunciation is for her to have a possibility to escape from the patriarchal order and attain her own subject position. Therefore the mother should resolve her relationship and assist her daughter in becoming a subject. Irigaray states that: “When I speak of the relation to the mother, I mean that in our patriarchal culture the daughter is absolutely unable to control her relation to her mother. Nor can the woman control her relation to her maternity, unless she reduces to that role alone” (Irigaray, 1985: 143). The mother-daughter relationship in Tahereh’s poem is an attempt to create a new discourse and replace the normative pattern. Tahereh removes the boundaries and restrictions between the mother and daughter figures, in order to give voice to women in Iran and mobilise their potency.

The second period of Tahereh’s writing brings Western and Eastern styles and imagery together. She was criticised in this period for using too many foreign words and too much Western ideology in her poems (Milani, 1992: 158). However, Tahereh’s stance shifts once again, and themes of spirituality and Islamic topics, as well as views opposing Western influence in the social and political domains, start to appear more frequently from the second part of her collection, *Tanin Dar Delta* (*Echo in Delta*). When she deploys Islamic topics in her poems she has a new interpretation of them and she does not copy them as they are read in traditional understanding. For example, her poem “*Fath Kamel Nist*” (“Conquest Is Not Complete”), illustrates her feelings of corruption, oppression and alienation from other people. She inserts religious gestures and terminology to provide a stable and unified meaning for her life:

There comes the pure voice of Azan.
The pure voice of azan
Is the cry of the believing hands of a man
Which pluck from my healthy roots

The feeling of getting away, getting lost, becoming an Island.
 I am heading towards a great prayer.
 My ablution is from the street air,
 And the dark paths of smoke.
 And the kiblahs of events over time,
 Grant my prayers.
 My nail polish
 Does not keep me
 From uttering "Allah-o-Akbar."
 And I know a prayer of miracle
 A prayer of conversion.

(Translated by Talattof, 2000: 131)

In this poem the *Azan* (call to prayer) chanted by the *Moazzen* (the caller to prayer), invites the poet to return to her roots, where she can find herself amongst other believers, so that she is no longer alone and isolated. *Azan*, for the poetic persona, is a waking point, although Tahereh shows that religious feelings are not opposed to or interrupted by the identity of the persona as a modern woman. Tahereh shows the clash of traditionalism with modernity. She reveals the double face of the Pahlavi period by carrying "nail polish" and then "prayer chanting". She closes the poem with a "prayer for change". Milani states that Tahereh "finds an invigorating ideology of freedom and equality" in Islam and prescribes it as a "revolutionary banner to mobilise people" (Milani, 1992: 167). It can be argued that the impact of the feminist consciousness is exposed in Tahereh's poem, and that it shows the beginning of new activities in women's poetry, especially for Islamic poets after the Revolution, which female poets of the past did not reflect in their discourse. Although these Islamic authors did not apply gender-related statements in their work, they did occasionally add to the body of women's discourse by reinterpreting Islamic norms.

In other words, Tahereh's poetry in this phase takes swift steps to connect with Islamic themes. In an interview with Mohammad Ali Esfahani in *Harekat va Diruz*, she explained: "My renewed attraction to Shi'ism has its source in my own basic love of justice and my hatred for oppression and compromise. The philosophy of Shi'ism has for its basis and for its power of motivation the love of justice and it is strongly opposed to compromise" (Saffarzadeh, 1975: 162). For Tahereh, Islam becomes the ideology of resistance to the West, and of seclusion from society, monarchy and autocracy of the

“Pahlavi dynasty”. As Milani states, Tahereh found the religion “as the sole viable cure for all the ills and affliction of her society and voluntarily veils herself” (Milani, 1992: 167). Whereas in Tahereh’s early poetry, religion had a personalised impact, in her subsequent poetry it became an effective tool in building her ideal society.

Post-Revolutionary Work

Tahereh’s third phase or post-revolutionary work can be considered as making a transition from her early work toward her full compliance with religious themes and the literature concerning the Islamic revolution (*Adabiyat-e Engelab-e Farhangi*). Throughout the poetry of her third phase, her style did not obey *Nimaic* rhythms or any structured rhythmic design. In addition, she used more controlled tone in this new period of poetry. While she expressed her inner feelings more openly in her earlier poems, here she had well-preserved manners by using a measured, metaphorical and ironic language.

After the Shah’s overthrow in 1979, an Islamic government was established by Ayatollah Khomeini and this radically transformed Iranian society. The practice of veiling became mandatory. The veil was mainly advocated as a political campaign to resist the Westernisation that was considered one of the reasons for the supposed moral corruption in Iran. By the late 1970s, for many women, such as Tahereh, the veil represented what the Pahlavis had rejected; from a symbol of oppression and a badge of backwardness, it was transformed into a marker of protest and of a new Islamic identity (Mir-hosseini, 2007: 7). Tahereh’s poetry after the Revolution changed its direction compared to her collections before the Revolution. As she began to practice veiling willingly, her poetic persona also started to veil her outraged feminist voice. It was as if she blocked her poetic personas’ sense of the search for self-enunciation, the “sensible transcendental” and Western style personality that had marked her poetry in the Pahlavi period, and instead replaced it with a new sense of identity. This new shift in Tahereh’s poetry seems distant from the ideas and practice of individualism and women’s rights. It is more about religious obligations. In these poems, she indicates her support for the elimination of Western elements and intervention. Finally, the link between religion and her poetry develops even more strongly in her later work. Her poetry collections after the Revolution concentrated on her quest for joining and fitting into Islamic themes. In these poems, she identifies herself strongly with Islam and its ties with politics. In contrast to her earlier collections, her poems after the Revolution do not resist the

patriarchal system in society. The poetic opponent in her new poems is now Western imperialism and not male subjects. For example, in the collection *Beíáat ba Bidari* (*Allegiance to Wakefulness*), published during the Iran-Iraq war in 1987, Tahereh praises Ayatollah Khomeini as a hero among the prophets and as the soul of God spreading justice:

Never was night followed by such awakening
 never did night see so many keeping vigil
 enemy of sleep
 soul of God spreading justice
 you are the ancestor of all heroes
 the hero among prophets
 In an era of temptation and greed
 in an era of ubiquitous murder
 an era of convincing impostors
 of bribe-givers and night seekers
 in the darkest night of history
 you are the East in every universe
 with nothing between you and the sun[.]
 (Translated by Milani, 1992: 169)

According to Milani, in Tahereh's poetry after the Revolution, her women do not any more long to rebel against imposed gender restrictions. Milani continues:

Her [Tahereh's] feminist voice is submerged in a neuter persona, if not discounting, then at least hiding her sex behind an asexual facade. In these gender-indistinguishable poems, the peculiarities of the self are transformed, harnessed into the revolutionary social system, where there is no space for personal, especially feminist, demands. One no longer finds any concern over the fate of women, let alone any protest over her condition. (Milani, 1992:171)

Breaking Codes of *Sharm* (self-erasure)

Although Tahereh's early poems to some extent broke the code of *sharm*, her post-revolutionary work became neutral and gender-less, composed in the context of *sharm*. Tahereh's attention to the self and lyrical images of love disappeared and they were replaced by a collective self and religious desire. In the following example, Tahereh offers her poem up to be the host of a martyr and addresses the martyr:

O, you martyr
 hold my hands
 with your hands
 cut from earthly means.
 Hold my hands,
 I am your poet,
 with an afflicted body,
 I've come to be with you
 and on the promised day
 we shall rise again.

(Translated Milani, 1992: 172)

Similar to Parvin's poetry in Reza Shah's period, Tahereh's later work carefully detaches her inner self from her readers. She disguises her gender and has a neutral approach to gender-related subjects. Her critical voice disappears and there is no confrontation with male-controlled society. Unlike Parvin, however, who utilises a storytelling approach in her poetry, Tahereh's later poetry stresses religious and political themes. In Parvin's later poetry she attempts to show her anger and refuses her marginality, but in Tahereh's later works she does not show any resentment. Her feminist voice, seeking equality for the sexes, is almost non-existent in her later collections. Her enunciation of self has vanished amongst the voices of the revolutionary society. Tahereh's conformity to the collective voice of society and the gender politics of the period after the Revolution could depict the poet's conscious choice of changing her direction of writing under the hegemony of Islamic politics.

Moreover, divine titles and expressions in Tahereh's later poems rely upon semantic approaches (the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions). In the earlier poems, lexical (fixed expressions that occur frequently in dialogues) and semantic approaches were largely absent and only a small number of titles of God appeared during this phase. And they are general names of God, despite the religious themes of some of her poetry of this period. However, in her later poems, divine names and titles take on an essential role in her poetry, to the extent that the topic of some poems is about the explanation of God's names and characteristics. During this period, much of Tahereh's time was devoted to translation of the Q'uran, prayers and Islamic transcripts. Furthermore, the application of these divine titles in Tahereh's poetry within this period has been chosen deliberately with respect to their literal and practical connotation. Some

of the names that appear frequently in her later poems are: *Allah* (God), *Hagh* (truth), *Tawhid* (monotheism), *Karim* (generous), *Ghader* (capable). For example, in her collection *Tanin Dar Delta*, 1970, (Resonance in the Delta) from one of the poet's very early works, the name *Khoda* (God) is only mentioned five times and the Arabic term *Allah* is only mentioned once. In 1987, in her collection, *Didar-e Sobh* (*Morning Visitation*) the frequency raises to twelve for *Allah* and fifteen for *Khoda*. The number drastically increases in her collection *Roshangaran-e Rah* (*The Road Enlighteners*, 2005), to 53 and 30, respectively.

Tahereh's work after the Revolution, unlike her early work, cannot be read in terms of Irigaray's three phase division. The female personas in Tahereh's later work remain in an 'economy of the same'. But their presence in phallographic logic does nothing to deconstruct that logic. In such a symbolic order, the female personas have no right to claim their own unique genealogy, beliefs or becoming, and as such cannot enunciate their inner self or the "sensible transcendental" as a locus for changes to the symbolic order.

For Tahereh, religion was a personal issue before the Islamic Revolution, but after the Revolution Sharia laws informed the state's policies and "it was no longer enough to be just a believer; one had to wear one's beliefs in the form of hijab" (Mir-Hosseini, 2005:1). Tahereh both veiled herself and her poetry simultaneously. As one of the pioneers of modern religious poetry, her poems after the Revolution illustrate a new episode for female poets, in which they represent resistance against Western ideology, religious themes with political consciousness and their interest in the issues of the period more widely. The themes in their poems included the war, martyrs and warriors, Shia Imams, Ayatollah Khomeini, and mothers. Islamic poets such as Tahereh, Fatemeh Rakei and Sepideh Kashani supported the new ideology of the Revolution by presenting Islamic themes in their poetry. In return, as discussed in earlier chapters, the Islamic regime acknowledged their literary works, facilitated their publication, and considered them as important tools in advancing and enhancing religious ideology.

Simin Behbahani (1927-2014)

Early Work

Simin Behbahani is another female poet whose work falls within both the Pahlavi and the post-revolution period. She is known as 'the lioness of Iran' (Keshavarz, 2007: B6). She has been nominated twice for the Nobel Prize in literature, and has collected many

literary awards around the world. Simin inverted the conventions of embodying women as objects of the male gaze. The committed *ghazals* were created as love poems for and about women who were at the centre of the poetry, there to be gazed at. However, Simin's *ghazals*, similar to Forough's poetry, removed the position of woman as beloved and transferred this position to men, who became the ones to be gazed at.

Simin refused to accept any binary modes of assessment. A dialogic reading of her poems uncovers her critique of any proposed finalised reading. She has never subscribed to absolutes. The flexibility of her poems, her use of different genres and structures, all reveal a mixture of content and a fluidity of perspectives. In her poetry she reconstructs the common limitations of her society and this portrays the flexibility of her thinking. She never restricted herself to an absolute and fixed position. Her poetry does not fit into limited categories. Her work is the manifestation of both feminine and masculine, traditional and modern, personal and collective, old and new, art and history, and many more. Simin questions the social hierarchies, gender relations and power structures in every aspect of her writing. Her poetry is in the style of the masters of Persian *ghazals* but the substance of her poetry is different. The committed *ghazal* writers wrote of wine and nightingales, and expressed their grief for their beloved. Simin not only wrote of love, but also of politics and the realities of her culture. In her very first published poem she asks "O moaning starving masses, what will you do? / O poor anguished nation, what will you do?" (Behbahani & Milani, 1999: xix)

In my analysis of Simin's poetry, similar to that of Tahereh, her post-revolutionary poems will be evaluated against her earlier works, to demonstrate the poet's approach in terms of Irigarayan modes of resistance. Furthermore, my analysis will show to what extent her poems addressed the question of ethical subjectivity (dialogism). I will also compare her work to the previously discussed poets to show the shift of degree in delivering a subversive discourse of gender relations.

Simin's parents, Abbas Khalili and Fakhre-e Ozma Arghun, were both from elite families. They were both also poets and writers. Her mother was a teacher of the French language as well as a member of *Kanun-e Nesvan-e Vatankhah* (Association of Patriotic Women). Her father was the editor of the *Eghdam* (action) newspaper, and wrote poetry both in Persian and Arabic. Simin was privileged from a young age to start writing poetry and she published her first poem at the age of fourteen. Simin was seventeen when she got married. She had three children, but her marriage was not a happy one and

ended in divorce after twenty years. In her second marriage, she married for 14 years until her husband died suddenly. Simin loved her second husband and suffered the pain of losing him. She became a high school teacher to earn a living after his death.

In general, Simin's poetry is about issues such as haggling for food in busy markets, waiting in queues for scarce commodities, giving birth and bringing up children, motherhood, freedom of expression, freedom of choice, the rights of minorities, women's body and their enforced veiling, women during the war, and others. Her earlier work was created within the context of a leftist oppositional literary setting. Different forms of socialist concepts and Marxist literary criticism of committed literature (*adabiyat-e moti-ahid*) inspired her poetry's thematic choice. The themes of her earlier poetry mostly involved poverty, orphans and corruption, portraying her disturbed feelings for the marginalised and the abandoned. However, her innovative style provided Simin with the possibility to practice the dialogue of multiple voices in her poetry and prepared her to show her resistance in her later poems. Her poems were written in Nima Yooshij's style, or *Chahar Pareh*, which is a modern Persian quatrain, and is written as a four-line (or two-couplet) poem, with rhymes at the end of each line. But she later changed her style to her own innovative style of *ghazal*. Simin's use of *ghazal*, a poetic form consisting of couplets that share a rhyme and refrain, is a very innovative style. She destabilised both the content and the form of the traditional *ghazal*. For example, while the classical *ghazal* form uses its theme in different split sections, in the new *ghazal* Simin provided a developing theme from the initial lines until the end of the poem. She incorporated dialogues and daily events into her *ghazals* and increased the range of classical Persian verse forms. Simin's choice of this new style could indicate her struggle to find a style that spoke to her yearning to write as a woman. This yearning embodies Irigaray's "house of language" where an author can live and speak (*parler femme*). Like Irigaray, for Simin, speaking as a woman is about bringing her body into language and refusing the authority of the patriarchy.

It can be argued that Simin also benefits from the Irigaryian strategy of "*retour et retouche*"²⁹, which is a reconstructing sign in Simin's poetry. As discussed in

²⁹ This strategy is to substitute masculine monological language with dialogical language for women to recreate a female imaginary which is flexible, expressive and fluid: the *retour* (return) and the *retouche* (touching again). To express, respectively, man's and woman's different relation to the maternal-feminine, Irigaray uses this pair of terms (1985: 126-135). The term *retouche* is used to represent touching as a mode of being, more suited to the feminine, and it is presented as a counter to the masculine mode of assimilation. On the other hand, the term *retour* can be represented as the dependency of the male imaginary for its projection on the maternal feminine, to which it must always

previous chapters, for Irigaray, the female body's "two lips" imply auto-affection: women care for themselves and reject male authority by replacing male monological speech with a multiplicity of voices (polymorphy). For Simin, writing her poems in new forms of *ghazal* is also a step toward rethinking and reconstructing the cultural imaginary and generating a female imaginary which is flexible and expressive, and detached from normative logic of classical form. For Simin as for Irigaray, a woman's desire for herself can respond to the authoritarian system of man-to-man as the universal "I", and indicates a care for oneself. Writing in a new style provided the poet with the ability to include collective voices in her poems. By desegregating and inverting the dominant masculine style of poetry by the technique of mimesis, Simin could provide social and literary equality through her innovative form of *ghazal*. She made it possible for other women to produce in this style, as well as to be able to read in this style. Women can become the authors of these *ghazals* and be counted side by side against the masculine *ghazal* producers such as Hafez and Saadi Shirazi. They can now express their love and passion directly in their feminised *ghazals*.

Simin can be placed to be in the same poetic level as Forough, in terms of her creative style and poetic articulation. Her social views before the Revolution directed her to apply committed literature's pragmatic view and metaphoric language to deliver concerns regarding social problems, class, poverty and political freedom. Her concern for women's issues did not arise fully until the feminist movement after the Revolution (Najmabadi, 1990: 20). Issues related to women were considered as secondary issues. In her five volumes *The Broken Lute* (*Seh-tar-e Shekasteh*, 1951), *The Footprint* (*Jay-e Pa*, 1954), *The Chandelier* (*Chelcheragh*, 1955), *The Marble* (*Marmar*, 1961) and *Resurrection* (*Rastakhiz*, 1971), all written before the Revolution, social issues and attempts to support leftist causes reflect her literary movement over this period. In *Jay-e Pa* Simin writes that:

The important and interesting part of my work has been to explain people's pain and dissatisfaction. I confess that since I have presented my poems for public judgment, I have been encouraged by critics and have been welcomed by the people, especially those from deprived and oppressed classes. (Talattof, 1997: 539)

return. He must return to the other (the feminine) in order to love himself (auto-affection) and women serve as a mirror for reflecting him back to confirm his projection.

Simin's inclination to social themes is more apparent in this collection, and she illustrates the lives of poor and under-privileged students, ill children, funeral directors who are responsible for washing the dead, prostitutes and artists. Although she sometimes uses female poetic personas in her poems, her key interest remains in social discrimination. She conveys the voice of the oppressed individuals in the poems in order to support their stance. In support of a jailed thief, for example, she expresses the tragedy:

I don't know who my father is
 or where I opened my eyes to the world,
 who bore and fostered me,
 nor at whose breast I suckled [...]
 I have slept hungry, begrudged a piece of bread,
 in the corner of the mosques, on torn mats.

(Translated by Kamran Talattof, 1997: 539)

Simin blames society, poverty, the absence of family protection and other factors step by step in her lines. In another poem from this collection, "The Prostitute Song", she writes about a prostitute who uses make-up to mask her face that is "withered with sorrow", and who is waiting for the knock at her door. She asks for make-up and a tight-fitting dress so that she can hide her sorrow and people (men) can embrace her more tightly. She portrays the lack of love and emptiness in her life. She asks for wine to give her moments of forgetfulness so she can overcome her sorrow and laugh at her unfortunate life:

pass me that cup of wine,
 so I may laugh at my misfortunes in my drunkenness,
 so I may mask my sorrows
 with a gay and appealing face.

(Translated by Milani, 2011:128)

This poem is one of few poems written before the Revolution where Simin draws attention to gender relations and criticises the patriarchal system's view of women as commodities. Similar to Irigaray's perception in "Women on the Market", Simin reveals the position of use value and exchange value of women in the patriarchal society, treated in the same way as any other commodity. In the Irigarayan sense Simin shows that the prostitute is seen as "used up" in masculine culture, which makes her a suitable object of exchange for men's desire, without consideration of women's own desire

(Irigaray, 1985: 808). The prostitute in the poem is fully aware of her commodity value in this phallocratic system and she suffers the pain of being empty:

I have many people, yet I have no one,
no one to stand by me, share my sorrows.
many make displays of affection,
but they never last beyond the instant.

(Translated by Milani, 2011: 129)

By repeating the prostitute's voice of sorrow Simin seeks to conclude that the division of women into "natural" bodies that are defined by the male-imposed value system results only in the silencing of women's voices and desire:

Lips, lips, cunning lips,
Draw a veil of mystery on my sorrows,
So they will give me a few more coins.
Smile, kiss, enchant!

(ibid)

In another similar poem, "The Dancer Girl" ("*Raqas-eh*"), Simin portrays the social prospects of a dancer girl and her feelings of neglect as she works in a cabaret (*meykhaneh*). The poem is about a dancer who performs a seductive dance every night, and to whom drunken men yell in loud voices of desire as the dancer flings her golden hair and her frilled skirt in the air. As the dance ends, the men cheer and excitedly tear their garments and toss flowers to her. But, on this occasion the girl is not in the same mood as she was on the other nights. She is sad and depressed. She is drinking to forget her sorrow and pain so she can endure the night. However, the wine makes her feel more miserable and woeful. She goes over her life and finds out that it has been spent to the attention of others' desire and she has never attended to herself. She feels that she must take her revenge on these cabarets. But no one pays attention to her feelings and they continue their laughter. Working as a dancer in the cabaret for women in the Pahlavi period was regarded as the image of the "exotic other" for the customers of the cabaret. For them her destiny was similar to that of the prostitute, although she had to follow strict regulations (Meftahi, 2016: 82).

In this poem Simin provides a voice for the "exotic other", considered as an outsider in this social context. Simin gives visibility and a subject position to the girl. She provides a space and locus for the "other" to speak loudly and stop the entire cabaret to listen to her. In addition, the locus provides the readers of the poem a place to

stop and measure their own already-formed locus of otherness, where their desire is in pre-shaped casts. The dancing girl encourages readers to contextualise their assigned social space. In other words, the poem is a request to readers to pursue the subject self. It enables the reader to leave the already formed self of their culture and to question the norms of their culture. By using Irigaray's mimesis technique, Simin also inverts the belief in the position of a man as a rescuer with the potential to improve the dancing girl's life, and she closes the poem with several questions. These questions represent open-endedness in the poem, where the poet is able to stress the question of women's subjectivity and to criticise any finalised reading:

the young girl screamed: "Tell me",
 who is it? Who among you is there?
 Who among you will not push me away tomorrow
 when my youth is no longer?
 Who is it? Tell me! Who is the person among you
 who would liberate me from these drunkards?
 Who will give my life a new beginning?
 Hold my hand and bring me to a better path?

(Translated by Touraje, 2008: 74)

The girl in these lines expresses her anger to the tyrant men who wasted her youth and sexuality; she has realised that she will not be attractive to them by the time her youth expires. The dancing girl conceived that the 'self' she is voicing is always already formed by the normative signifiers of the masculine society. Seeking someone from among the spectators to save her life and change her life's direction is therefore not surprising.

Despite the gender-related poems in Simin's collections, she continuously opposed being classified as a feminist or a 'woman poet'. Along with being the voice for all oppressed people who suffered from different subjects, she also questioned some of the concealed and dominant forms of gender inequality throughout her collections. Although she challenged these stereotypes about women more dominantly in her post-revolutionary poems, her few pre-revolutionary poems related to gender inequality themes, discussed above, have the same asset and aptitude to inspire her readers' awareness. In addition, Simin's methods of assessing gender issues in her earlier poems are similar to other female writers of her time before the Revolution, who wrote in the context of the committed literature. The storyline of the poems aims to enlighten readers

about existing social issues and to provide a solution in metaphorical and symbolic language. For example, in the following poem, the poet's use of words such as "cold", "silence" and "fruitless" is to imply repression, while words such as "spring" and "rainbow" allude to the popular uprising, and finally words "sunshine" and "laughter" imply liberty:

I have seen the rainbow
laughing in the minute particles of the rain.
I have read the hidden secret in the green book of the spring,
the change of the fruitless season
to flowering and the bearing of fruit.
(Translated by Talattof, 1997: 540)

Because of Simin's concern with wider social issues in the earlier poems, her personal support for women's concerns and gender-related points in her poetry did not give voice to a feminist literary movement. Instead, her support for the committed literature motivated women to participate in the revolutionary movements of 1979, not because of gender inequality issues, but to join with other oppressed groups to oppose the Pahlavi ideology. Although poets such as Simin were restricted within a masculine literary framework, the context started to change in her later poems after the Revolution, and she gradually began to create autonomous literary expressions.

Post-Revolutionary Work: Feminist Inclination

After the Revolution, Simin Behbahani's poetry, similar to other poets of the period, was inspired by both the post-revolutionary environment inside the country and the feminist ideas that had been popular in the West since the late 1960s, as well as the growth of feminist movements in some Middle Eastern regions such as Turkey and Egypt. Simin's poems from before the Revolution were based around a structured literary discourse that picked its themes from social issues rather than gender specifically. However, the Cultural Revolution and Islamisation of the state and society after the revolution provided a new context for literary discourse, formed by the state's concern about the influence of the West on Iranian women, and the implementation of gender-specific programs such as the compulsory veiling of women. Simin's poetry at this period focused more on themes related to the condition of women and feminist consciousness, as well as her self-enunciation, elevated to another level of recognition. She changed both her themes and forms within her later poetry. She expresses the

feelings of women who must tolerate the hardships of life during the war, such as haggling for food prices in crowded fairs, waiting in queues for restricted amounts of food and at the same time having to raise children alone. Zahra Ghahramani explains the food shortages during the war and states that: “Food shortages leave shelves bare in some stores; at others, people queue for hours to purchase items that are difficult to find, such as vegetables, spices, and cooking oil. It doesn’t matter how early you turn up at a store; others have arrived earlier still. Some camped outside stores overnight” (Ghahramani, 2012: 22). In her poem “What are they giving here? Tell us” (*“Inja che midahand? Begu”*) a change in Simin’s style, form and themes is visible. The poem takes a dialogic form and has a dramatic storyline. She also changed the traditional place of verses and inserted daily events of life into the poem (e.g. the queues in Tehran):

A man is pressing me
say nothing, ignore him
he wants you to perceive
what the pressure of the grave is.
(ibid: 551)

Simin illustrates the suffering of women living during the 1980s war between Iraq and Iran, when women had taken many of the responsibilities of men who were fighting in the front line. She talks about a woman who gives birth while she is in the long queues to get food. She shows the public presence of women’s bodies, that opposes the established standards and the new system’s beliefs, which insist on not exposing women’s bodies publicly. In this poem, Simin, in a satirical sense and employing the technique of mimesis, inverts the existing excuses for women not to have an active presence in the public domain, such as the need to avoid being in direct contact with men. A man who is pressing the woman in the queue changes its sexual semantic to a nonphysical one. The persona convinces the woman that she should not think of the man’s pressing her for his sexual desire, but his pressing her is to remind her of the pressure of grave after death (since it is a long queue and the space for standing is very limited). Simin implies a preference for verbs that invite dialogue and are predicated on connectedness. Simin in this poem used intransitive verbs with prepositions such as “to” along with transitive verbs that risk reducing the other to an object. In terms of usage of imperative verbs such as “say”, “go”, “ignore”, Simin, similar to Irigaray, shows that the use of dialogic verbs in her utterances demonstrates “communication” and is a

technique to resist the monologic verbs or transitive verbs which undermine the subjectivity of women (Irigaray, 1993: 83). For Simin, as for Irigaray, freeing oneself from the dominant fundamentalist language requires a language of shared perspectives that respects the space of the other and does not attempt to speak for the other (Irigaray, 2002: 7). Simin builds a language that is fully conscious of the consequences of her poetic diction, particularly the verbs.

The poet's feminist language is intense at this point in her poetry and she raises her outraged voice louder than before. In her introduction to her "Selected Poems" (*Gozideh Ash'ar*), published in 1989, Simin argues that her opinions cannot fit into the traditional forms of *ghazal*:

The ghazal is for beautiful thoughts, so how, then, can I beautifully allude to what the women of my society have suffered throughout history, such as the 'bringing of the severed head of Zuhrah to the party of the Khan,' the blood loss of virginity of girls to Chinghiz, hanging the severed hand of a gypsy from a branch, the aiming of an arrow of Timur at the pupil of a woman's eye? (Behbahani, 1989: 591)

It is possible to argue, therefore, that Simin had always followed the current waves of her society to get inspired in the narration of her poetry. In her later poems the presence of oppressed women is stronger compared to her earlier poems, since sex-segregation and instances of gender inequality are more prevalent in this period, and Simin feels the need to express the voice of these oppressed women in her poetry. The set of poems she dedicated to gypsies demonstrates this flexibility, in her collection *Arzhan Plain* (*Dasht-e Arzhan*, 1983).

The gypsies in her poems are identified with the poet. In the closing lines of her "Gypsiesque (1)" ("Kowlivareh 1"), she writes:

Gypsy, you haven't answered me,
Only echoed everything I've said.
Is it fair to mock and make fun?
Of anyone as weary as me?
I am the gypsy, oh, yes
Here there is no one else but me
The gypsy's image is visible
As long as I face the mirror.

(Translated by Milani, 1999: 77)

Gypsies are metaphorically recognised with adjectives such as immoral and violent, and have loud voices. They wear unusual and bizarre clothes that are not common in the general public, and are against conventional norms. To call someone “*kowli*” (gypsy) is not considered a compliment in the Persian language and culture, and to say that a woman is like a gypsy is an offensive and critical remark. A gypsy is accompanied with all unwelcome behaviours. She is arrogant, she sings and dances in public, she steals, she makes loud noises, she does not obey rules, she stares, she is not sorry for her crimes, and most importantly she has a limitless mobility.

However, Simin, like Irigaray, refutes the neuter meaning of the “other” and stresses the existence of the other: “love of the other, concern for the other, etc., without it being asked whom or what this other represents” (Irigaray, 1996: 61). Simin’s gypsy collection talks about the subject of the mobilisation and voicing of women. These poems consider the ethical relations of the subjectivity of women as their thematic subject. Borrowing from Irigaray we may call the gypsy the space of “otherness”. Irigaray identifies otherness as the state of marginalised groups. In her earlier works, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) and *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985), Irigaray sought to examine women’s “otherness”. Irigaray states: “the Other often stands [...] for production of a hatred for the other. Not intended to be open to interpretation” (*An Ethics of Difference*, 1993: 112). The space of otherness is the locus occupied by other things or groups that are eliminated from the controlling discourse. Mary Douglas, in *Purity and Danger*, states that “The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system” (Douglas, 1966: 115). The gypsy is similar to the boundaries and borders of the body. Images of the gypsy’s body represent the marginalised discourse, while her singing is performed as her resistance against the dominant discourse.

The gypsy in Simin’s poems is portrayed as a woman. Simin’s gypsy has the capability of confronting all restrictions and boundaries, and opposing all customs and practices. One cannot restrain her; she is free and mobile. She is not passive and has an active presence. She holds an identity that is not restrained by any conventions. She does not recognise any geographical boundaries. She leaves her framed space and marches into the public eye. She is not silent; she has a loud voice; her voice is transgressive. She questions the values of existing authority.

Gypsies in Iranian culture were conventionally regarded as the “other”. The society and customs which once eliminated the gypsies, at the same time feared and tolerated them, both disliking and desiring their fantasy and freedom. Despite their

relaxed lifestyle, independence, mobility and rebelliousness, one cannot deny their homelessness, the grief of marginality, poverty and isolation. Gypsies can be traced back in Persian literature for centuries. They have been referred to as being supernatural, romantic and adventurous figures. Milani depicts the presence of gypsies in older literary instances:

They [gypsies] appear mainly as entertainers, exotic performers of music and dance. According to Ferdowsi in his monumental *Shahnameh*, they were first brought into Iran by the Persian monarch Bahram-e Gur, who asked the Indian King Shangul for dancers and singers. His request was granted by the dispatch of ten thousand Gypsies to the Persian kingdom. (Milani, 2011: 178)

The gypsies' everyday life in Iran, because of their mobility and presence, was not sexually segregated. This quality of life provides Iranian women poets and writers with new meanings and metaphorical expressions for sex segregation within their writings. They serve as perfect images for the ones who resist restrictions and boundaries of any type. In a sexually separated society, the advantage of being able to move, for a woman, is a merit. Fatima Mernissi, in *Women in Moslem Paradise*, associates this with a heavenly privilege:

One thing I discovered while scrutinizing my place in Paradise is that one ought to insist on the right to move freely in and out of it if one so desires. More important than Paradise is the freedom to move around without conditions; without qualifications; without permission. More important probably than the right to enter Paradise, is the right to leave it for no reason other than a totally arbitrary, whimsical desire to discover other. (Mernissi, 1986)

To show this movement, Simin deconstructs the image of the gypsy and then reconstructs it with new liberal meanings. She conceals the old traditional associations of the gypsy and replaces them with new ones.

Breaking Codes of *Sharm* (self-erasure)

The gypsy Simin introduces in her poems is in contrast to the old ideas and has a dialogic voice. She is independent and uncontrollable rather than being controllable. She is free. She is brave rather than violent. Simin celebrates the gypsy's existence rather than censuring her. She illustrates the gypsy as a woman who questions the conventional feminine values of *sharm*, stillness, silence, forgetfulness and invisibility. These elements are more apparent in "Gypsiesque (13)". This poem observes the

dominance of three vital cultural concerns: women's visibility, women's mobility and women's voices.

Sing, Gypsy, sing.
 In homage to being you must sing.
 Let ears register your presence.
 Eyes and throats burn from the smoke
 that trails the monsters as they soar in the sky.
 Scream if you can of the terrors of this night.
 Every monster has the secret of his life
 hidden in a bottle in the stomach of a red fish
 swimming in waters you cannot reach.
 In her lap every maid holds a monster's head
 like a piece of firewood set in silver.
 In their frenzy to plunder, the monsters
 have plundered the beautiful maidens
 of the silk and rubies of their lips and cheeks.
 Gypsy stamp your feet.
 For your freedom stamp your feet.
 To get an answer,
 send a message with their beat.
 To your existence there must be a purpose under heaven.
 To draw a spark from these stones,
 stamp your feet.
 Ages dark and ancient
 have pressed their weight against your body.
 Break out of their embrace,
 lest you stay a mere trace in a fossil.
 Gypsy, to stay alive, you must slay silence.
 I mean, to pay homage to being, you must sing.
 (Translated by Milani, 1999: 75)

The poem is a call to women to celebrate their existence by letting their voices be heard. She defines "Kowli" as a woman, and describes nine prominent characteristics that she has: her repression by conventional society, her being criticised by that same society, her self-assurance, her intimacy with her environment and nature, her care for her

choices and independence, her rebelliousness, her being dispossessed, her crucial rank in society, and her cheerful happiness and freedom of choice regardless of all of this.

In lines 12-14 the poet explains how the monsters, in their anger, have stolen the rights of women, made them invisible by hiding their beauty and controlling their dress and looks. In a dialogic voice the poet asks the gypsy to claim her right: "Gypsy stamp your feet. / For your freedom stamp your feet." Simin creates a polyphonic hero in the poem. The hero, who insists that the gypsy sings, has a limited control, and the hero's voice does not dictate over the voices of the other participants. Thus the polyphonic feature ends the monologic control of the monsters.

In lines 21-23 the veil offers a fresh view of the past and a point from which to reconsider new feminine roles. The poet suggests that a woman should present her voice explicitly; Simin unveils this woman (the gypsy) who has to wear a veil in public. The poet gives her courage to break the shell of invisibility. She should become a fish, celebrating and enjoying her freedom to swim in open waters with no defined boundaries or rules to restrict her mobility. This is the key to her freedom which the poet introduces to release the gypsy from oppression: the oppression that has crushed and deformed women's bodies by its imposed decisions.

There is a celebratory dimension to the poem, with the use of costumes, giving it a 'carnavalesque' style. The gypsy is told to become a red fish to resist the monsters because she has access to the open waters and can swim freely. Only the red fish has the ability to defeat the monsters since she can hide and get rid of the monsters' authority, and ignore the monologic structure. To become a red fish is an illustration of becoming the "other", as it is in the carnival. Dialogism is at the heart of the self (the gypsy). Self is implied dialogically in otherness, just as the "grotesque body" (the monsters) is implied in the body of the other living beings. To become a fish is to escape from the rigidly established social structures represented by the monsters.

The carnival in this poem reaches its highest point in lines 7 and 8, ridiculing and mocking the monologic view of life, and the monologic voices of those in power. This temporarily forms a utopian society via an Irigarayan modality of syntax, embracing heteroglot knowledge, culture and the languages of all individuals. By becoming a red fish, the monsters are concealed in a bottle, like a secret note, and the bottle is hidden in the stomach of the red fish. The fish has temporarily provided an Irigarayan utopian world by veiling the monsters of authority.

Moreover, Simin stresses her poem's message by repetitively calling and inviting the gypsy to sing. The silenced and marginalised women's voices can only be broken at times when she sings. In fact Simin has used a similar invitation technique to that used by Irigaray. Simin invites the Gypsy woman to sing repetitively, and Irigaray invites women to "*parler*" in order to break the silence.

The Concept of the Mother-Daughter Relationship

In another poem from her collection *Arzhan Plain*, Simin refers to the relationship between mother and daughter that is damaged by patriarchal society:

Gracefully she approached,
 in a dress of bright blue silk;
 With an olive branch in her hand
 and many tales of sorrows in her eyes.
 Running to her, I greeted her,
 and took her hand in mine:
 Pulses could still be felt in her veins;
 warm was still her body with life.
 "But you are dead, mother", I said;
 "Oh, many years ago you died!"
 Neither of embalmment she smelled,
 Nor in a shroud was she wrapped.
 I gave a glance at the olive branch;
 she held it out to me,
 And said with a smile,
 "It is the sign of peace; take it."
 I took it from her and said,
 "Yes, it is the sign of...", when
 My voice and peace were broken
 by the violent arrival of a horseman.
 He carried a dagger under his tunic
 with which he shaped the olive branch
 Into a rod and looking at it
 he said to himself:
 "Not too bad a cane

for punishing the sinners!”
 A real image of a hellish pain!
 Then, to hide the rod,
 He opened his saddlebag.
 in there, O God!
 I saw a dead dove, with a string tied
 round its broken neck.
 My mother walked away with anger and sorrow;
 my eyes followed her;
 Like the mourners she wore
 a dress of black silk.

(Translated by Kianush, 1996: 114)

Implying Irigaray's schematised format of “(Ishe) Ishe → you she? (youshe)” (Irigaray, 1996:75), the poet here portrays the daughter's position and her speech, relative to her mother. Displaying images of mother and daughter together in this poem illustrates the need to alter the mother/daughter relationship that is a persistent theme in Irigaray's work. Irigaray stresses the need for mothers to symbolise themselves differently to their daughters, and to emphasise their daughter's subjectivity. Simin, by embodying the picture of mother and daughter, reminds women of their lack of subject identity, since the female identity is “imposed upon her as pure exteriority” (1996: 47). The poet announces the death of the mother's subjectivity: “‘But you are dead, mother’, I said / ‘Oh, many years ago you died!’” Through the technique of mimesis Simin reveals that the relationship between mothers and daughters must be “rehabilitated”. For example, the olive branch as a sign of peace offering implies the symbolic system of authorised, patriarchal and finalised establishments. The daughter rejects this ironic reconciliation and changes its meaning to the object that imprisoned the women: “Yes, it is the sign of...” The silence at the end of this line points to the Irigarayan use of words, silences and rhythms which tend “to disclose nature rather than control it” (Irigaray, 2004: 30). The peace is broken by the arrival of the horseman, and he is the one who “shaped the olive branch”. Therefore, this peace has no value and she refuses it.

Simin, like Zhale in the constitutional period and Forough in the Pahlavi period, shows her resistance to polygamy and the disloyalty of men in her society. In her poem “*Havu*” (“The second wife”), she depicts the crisis and consequences of a polygamous relationship:

Like a nimble snake, she crept softly out of her bed,
 To where that other woman was sleeping
 In her husband's warm embrace.
 Whispering to herself, she remembered the days
 When her husband, her glittering gem,
 Was not possessed by this woman.

(Translated by Milani, 1999: 119)

The poetic persona, in her distrust and jealousy, finally attempts to poison her husband, but she accidentally kills her own child instead:

She opened her eyes to discover who had chosen
 The robe of death and oblivion. Her husband and rival she found still asleep.
 It was her child who had drunk from the bowl.

(ibid)

In 2006, Simin joined a One Million Signatures campaign, a women's rights initiative to raise public awareness of legal, social and political discrimination against women in Iran. She received the Simone De Beauvoir prize in recognition of the campaign's significant impact on Iranian society, on behalf of the campaign's activists, in 2009. She told RFE/RL's Radio Farda that the prize will support and encourage feminist movements in Iran. Simin played an effective role in the Iranian women's movement and participated in most of the movement's meetings. In one of the gatherings in front of the University of Tehran, she read one of her poems about women's rights and gender inequality, the crowd was surrounded by security police (Childress, 2011: 110):

Don't boast about your superiority, we are your equal
 Why are you shooting us? We are your other half
 We gave life to your seed in our bodies
 Respect us, we are your maker and mother
 You seek in us refuge and peace, that's correct
 If you ask your heart, we are your wives and love
 We seek our rights and we are with each other, we are alive, happy and strong
 Walk with us, we are your supporters
 We are seeking the right to a good life,
 This is all we want; we are thirsty for your trust.

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

Here and in many other poems, Simin makes rhetorical choices that individualise the poetic narrator as female. She also developed a poetic dialogue to deal with socially sensitive issues from a female perception. Having repeatedly and fearlessly defended freedom of expression, Simin holds a unique place in Iranian society. Many popular songs and slogans are borrowed or memorised from lines of her poetry expressing daily sayings and events. Simin strongly questions gender roles and criticises the sex-segregation laws in her later poetry, sometimes showing her physical presence in the campaigns to recite her poems directly to the authorities. Although in her earlier poems she focuses on social themes, her later poems changed both in form and thematic concern. The impact of the post-revolutionary events such as the war, poverty, the repression of ethnic and religious minorities, and, most importantly, the oppression of women's voices and gender inequality, inspired Simin to become more outrageous and show a greater tendency to discuss women's issues. Her expression of all her broken hopes and anger is illustrated well in her poem "The house was cloudy once", in a dialogic intertextual reference to Nima Yushij's (1896-1960) poem "The House Is Cloudy":

The house was cloudy once
The house is bloody now
Such it was then, thus it is now.

(Translated by Milani, 2011: 170)

Simin offers men a new role in her *ghazals*. In this new style, similar to Forough, she changes the roles of traditional lover and beloved, and inverts the process of embodying women as objects of the male gaze. Many of her poems characterise such reversal of gender-bound representations and destabilise the normative system and traditions. She also violates the format of traditional *ghazals* and proposes a new literary position for women. The female personas Simin introduces, especially in her later poetry, represent a self-enunciation quite different from the passivity of the traditional woman in Iranian society. Simin mobilises the silenced women and gives them the right to expose their concealed feelings and make themselves more visible. She deconstructed the rules of *sharm* and offered women a steady public presence.

Finally, Simin believed that Iranian culture had a male-oriented substance. In her interviews she argues that, from the beginning of history, the patriarchal society in Iran has provided no opportunity for the progression of women and there is no significant representation of their role in history (Behbahani, 2009: 55). A wave of younger female

poets who grew up during the post-revolutionary period has continued to adopt Simin's style in depicting the patriarchal norms of their society. Simin's feminist tendency and hatred of war rendered her work very critical of the authorities, but her reputation both in Iran and among the female poets and writers in diaspora made her almost untouchable.

A Voice in Exile: Granaz Moussavi

Granaz Moussavi (born in 1974) is representative of female poets in Iranian diaspora literature. She is considered a member of the young generation of poets after the revolution, often referred to as the "children of the revolution" or sometimes the "scorched generation", who experienced the Iran-Iraq war in their upbringing and did not experience a peaceful childhood. Educated in the revolutionised schools, they faced many unanswered political and religious questions and became unconvinced by the authorities' justifications. Granaz is from a well-educated family and she emigrated with her parents to Australia in 1997.

Using her individual female voice, she echoes her repressed feelings and seeks for other possibilities of political and social articulation, resisting the ignorance of the male-oriented authorities. Granaz's imaginative language and creative attitudes, with strong polemics and a fearless voice, are an example of the range of expressions that exists within women's poetry at present. Free from the censorship and cultural normative perceptions or sensitivities, Granaz, unlike poets in Iran, has no limitations on the narration of her poetry. Her distinctive voice can be defined as the spontaneous reaction to her oppressed self with no conscious language restrictions, since she does not need to adhere to the state's political requirements.

Iran's young, post-revolutionary female poets have always struggled with finding a balance between commitment to the modern poetry of poets such as Simin Behbahani and Forough Farrokhzad and developing their own individual style. Granaz is a contemporary Iranian-Australian poet, film director and screenwriter who has developed an original voice in her poetry. Her work has been widely circulated, introduced in anthologies and criticised in papers by critics such as M. Azad, Dr Jalil Doustkhah, Mohammad Rahim Okhovat, Shahrnoush Parsipour and Ali Babachahi. Her poetic narration is original and creative. Her language has a systematic order and is packed with metaphors. Her move between two countries, Iran and Australia, is reflected in the form of longing and belonging in a poem such as "The Sale", where she

understands after returning to her mother country that she has changed both inside and outside. Granaz's first feature film, *My Tehran for Sale*, released in 2008, is also the first feature coproduction between the two countries. Unlike other Iranian diaspora films produced between the 1980s and 1990s, which are known for their portrayal of rural life and poverty, Granaz tries to demonstrate the uncertainty of urban life amongst young middle-class Iranians. The film has a poetic language and hints at the critical problems that exist amongst the youth today. Granaz, as an actress, in one part of the film takes the opportunity to read her own poems relating to women's oppression. The film addresses women's issues, HIV, underground music, the emigration of youth and secret abortions. Granaz started writing at the age of 17 as a book review writer and literary critic in the *Donyay-e Sokhan* literary magazine in Tehran. Her first poetry collection, *Sketching On Night (Khat Khati ruy-e Shab)*, was published in 1997 in Tehran. Her second collection, *Barefoot Till Morning (Pa Berahneh ta Sobh)* was published in 2000 and was the winner of the *Karnameh* best poetry book of the year award in 2001 in Tehran. Her third collection, *The Songs of the Forbidden Woman (Avazhay-e Zan Bi-Ejازه)* was published in 2003 and was the last of her collections to be published in Iran. Her last three collections were published in other countries: her 2006 work *Les Rescapes De La Patience* was published in France; in 2011 her work *Red Memory (Hafezeh-ye Germez)* was published in Australia; and her last work, in 2012, *Canto di Una Donna Senza Permesso*, was published in Italy. Granaz received a degree in screen studies from Flinders University in Adelaide and a postgraduate degree in film editing from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, and received her PhD in film studies and filmmaking from the University of Western Sydney.

Although Forough is considered a pioneer among the female poets who wrote about the erotic elements of the female body, other female poets such as Simin Behbahani and many other young poets continued to develop this approach after the Revolution. Erotic images in a poem do not always involve aspects of sex. Sometimes the poet uses elements related to the description of the aesthetic aspects of the human body, most typically the female body, to give voice to oppressed women. Granaz Moussavi is also not lacking in erotic descriptions, and she signifies feminine *jouissance* in her poetry as an implicit strategy. She seeks to challenge the dominance of phallic elements in traditional discourse by writing feminine difference into culture. In other words, with the specificity of a feminine *jouissance* indicated through her poetry, Granaz questions the domination of phallic *jouissance*.

Like Irigaray, Granaz's feminist assessment is focused on the "sexual indifference" that she finds at the heart of the social order and discourse. Granaz's work seeks to deconstruct phallic patterns and instead to focus on female sexuality. In other words, Granaz attempts to stress the radical alterity of the feminine by cultivating women's understanding of their bodies and desires. By inserting feminine poetic dictions and elements into her poetry Granaz criticises the masculine sexual imaginary for taking feminine pleasure away from discourse. The goal for Granaz, like Irigaray, is to form a place for feminine *jouissance*, embedded in the erotic and sensual experience of the body. The following poems will demonstrate how Granaz alters the poetic line to enact certain female experiences.

Irigaray offers a detailed picture of women's pleasure in language. In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, she argues that woman's desire cannot "be expected to speak the same language as man's; woman's desire has doubtless been submerged by the logic that has dominated the West since the time of the Greeks" (Irigaray, 1985: 25). A woman has often been classified by lack, the lack of a penis, the lack of reason and the lack of power. Irigaray, however, argues that woman lacks no/thing. She states that "[woman] she finds pleasure almost anywhere. [...] [T]he geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined – in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness" (ibid: 28). Irigaray stresses that women's language can offer them multiple sources of desire:

[In her language,] 'she' sets off in all directions leaving 'him' unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers' are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. [...] She steps ever so slightly aside from herself with a murmur, an exclamation, a whisper, a sentence left unfinished [...] When she returns, it is to set off again from elsewhere. From another point of pleasure or of pain. One would have to listen with another ear, as if hearing an 'other meaning' always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, concealed in them. (ibid: 29)

Female sexual desire in language, then, according to Irigaray, can happen as multiple beginnings, brief poetic dictions, split sentences, nonsensical reasoning and not following consequent patterns (beginning, middle, and end), as well as challenging fixed definitions and views. Female desire in Granaz's poetry collections disrupts the

linear narrative model that is prevalent in the male sexual response and follows Irigaray's '*écriture feminine*' pattern.

Granaz's poem, "Man (I)", from her *Sketching On Night* collection, is a direct exposure of women's subjectivity and identity crisis:

I
Am not a human neither a sparrow
I am a tiny occasion
Every time I fall
Split into two pieces
One half goes with the wind
The other half is taken by a man.

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

The poem shows how women are not adequately represented by the existing symbolic system in Iranian society. Borrowing from Irigaray, the poem also illustrates how in the patriarchal world, female subjectivity is based on a lack. The poetic persona explains that women are not given a proper place in this patriarchal world, and that she is in fact not existing either as a human or even as a tiny sparrow. The wind refers to the norms and standards of society which undermine the woman's identity to form. Finally, she blames "a man" for having power over her. Like Irigaray, the poetic persona challenges the fixed definitions related to women's subject position in a masculine society. It states that she has no subject position and is only considered as a tiny occasion. Irigaray argues that in a patriarchal society "woman exists only as an occasion for mediation, transaction, transition, transference, between man and his fellow man, indeed between man and himself" (1985: 193). The preference for succinct diction and fragmented sentences by the poet represents an announcement of the female desire to stress the domination of phallic *jouissance*. In the poem "Airport" ("*Forudgah*"), from the same collection, Granaz points her finger at men who always victimise and pick on women to boast of their power and superiority:

Search my bag.
what is the use anyway?
The sigh is hidden deep in my pocket
is all too familiar with: Halt!
Leave me alone!
Aa a matter of fact, I'll sleep with raspberry bush and won't be faced down

why do you always target a woman
 who abandons her walls,
 pins her heart to her shirt!
 There is nothing in my suitcase
 But innocent locks of hair.
 leave me alone!
 I've dreamed I've stolen this heart from God,
 And that I won't reach tomorrow.
 I dreamed the place to which I'm going
 my shoes stick to Friday.
 What if God's land has Leukemia?
 I'll tell my fortune with a dandelion, release its petals to the moon:
 Come back Friday of my childhood,
 Come back to me with that same boy
 Whose hands sprouted kites?
 And I, with all my ten counting fingers,
 Fell for him.
 Why do you always target a woman?
 Who has pinned her heart to her shirt?
 Here, in the bows and arrows of war's streets,
 Or in the muddied bellies of slack clotheslines,
 The flights are always delayed.
 The bats will eventually grow old.
 At least give back my childhood photo.
 Lonelier than a kite abandoned in a closet,
 I am finally stamped, and I miss home.
 The antenna shoots for the sky but
 My dress on the clothesline embraces God.
 (Translated by Wolpe, 2012: 76-77).

This poem also hints at the experience of Iranian youth living in exile due to social restrictions and constant surveillance. She repeatedly asks for her freedom and cries to be left alone. However, the poem ends with the poetic persona's thoughts that many of these young people, in exile, will not achieve their promised land in diaspora.

Breaking Codes of *Sharm* (self-erasure)

In another poem, “*Aseman Ra Beband*” (“Close the Sky”), from the same collection, Granaz illustrates a bitter but realistic view about love:

Barbed wire was my mother’s dowry
 On the border of the road that was reaching the bitter moon
 I sleep with you without love
 But I get up with more love
 Here the bare footed whores
 For one pair of shoes and one set of floral china,
 Run Mosaddegh to the end of Vali-asr Avenue
 Yes! The air is filled with sick children
 Our bed will be recognised
 Close the sky[.]

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

In this example, the poetic persona leaves behind the historical shyness and moral standards that are defined for women, in order to express her loveless life with her man. She embodies the sexual relationship that she has to comply with because of the marriage contract. The words “Mosaddegh” (democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 until 1953 when he was overthrown in an Anglo-American coup) and “Vali-asr” (the title and a synonym for the Twelfth Imam of Shia and the meaning directly attached to the last Saviour; also a name of street in Tehran) indicate the history of women’s suffering in a satirical way, which was the same from the Pahlavi period to the current Islamic period. The female persona gladly announces her freedom from the conventional paths of morality but pays the price for having done so. Instead of expressing self-restraint and instead of suffering from sexual repression, she gives voice to her fear in the form of physical desire and passion. The poetic persona in the last line gladly makes a public revelation of a sin for which the sentence was death: having sexual relations outside marriage. The sexual desire of the female persona and a relationship with a man outside the marriage contract, as well as the fear of revelation by the authorities, are reflected several times in different collections of Granaz’s poetry. For example, in her poems “*Rabete*h” (“Relationship”), “*Gonah*” (“Sin”) and “*Baz Ham Gonah*” (“Sin Again”) she similarly expresses her oppressed feelings of desire (*jouissance*):

Do you think if
 I embrace you in this way
 And we hide in the sunniest day
 Will they find us on Friday evening?

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

In her second collection, *Barefoot Till Morning (Pa Berahneh Ta Sobh)*, Granaz continues to transgress the dominant ways in which men and women imagine themselves and each other and their social space. In her poem “*Kutah*” (“Short”), the persona is annoyed at all the oppressions and she shows her anger:

Send me a new mirror
 My mirror was loaded with my broken images
 So it broke.

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

The female agony and anger in this poem offer an example of what Irigaray might mean by liberation from forms of masculine artistic dependency and focus instead on the nearly visible world of female culture. The poem is short but steady in movement, full of fluidity and flux. The title of the poem, “Short”, sets up an alternative sequence and initiates a rocking movement. The stress on “mirror”, the pronoun “my” and the word “broken” set the poem in motion. The persona’s need for a new mirror in the first line establishes a movement from her past identity that was imposed on her by the symbolic masculine order. The broken images of her and the mirror signify a rejection of the phallogocentric order. There are also multiple presences in the poem. Hence we have a sustained representation of Irigaray’s model of female subjectivity: “within herself she is already two – but not divisible into ones” (Irigaray, 1985: 24). The poem evokes a moment of strong *jouissance* to describe sheer unrepressed pleasure. As the poem opens up, the symbolic order of language is subsumed within the semiotic: “new mirror / my mirror / broken images / broken mirror”.

The concept and the performance of psychoanalysis is phallogocentrically subjective, with the symbolic male organ being privileged and given central importance in the universal order. But in this phallic language, in order to privilege the male, the female voice must be terminated. The psychoanalytic phallic social order’s existence relies upon the silenced and unrecognised body of the mother. Granaz, like Irigaray, uses masculine models against themselves. If the “feminine” is an indication of the uncountable figure in the phallic order, then the “imaginary body”, or the reflection,

must be masculine. According to Irigaray, since men keep the reflective side of the mirror, then women are the suppressed back part of the mirror, holding the mirror for men. They are not visible in the mirror and have no reflection of themselves. Therefore the poetic persona needs a new mirror to reflect her image and the old mirror must break. Granaz repeats the exact theme in her third collection, *The Songs of the Forbidden Woman (Avazhay-e Zan Bi-Ejازه)*, in “Akhar-e Khat” (“The Last Line”):

You removed your borders from my borders
to the margin
It was no one’s fault
my image couldn’t be focused any longer in your mirror[.]
(Trans: Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

A Novel Feminine Syntax

Granaz takes the feminine poetic experience further, however, by displaying her writing as an act of bodily *jouissance*. She expresses a new sensitivity in Iranian women’s poetry. This original and different awareness is characterised by selecting simple poetic diction and style to reflect the subjects which are more familiar to the younger generation’s experience of life in Iran. In the following poem, “Post-Cinderella”, she refuses to adapt to the mainstream obsession with modernist experimentation.

I have gone so far for you
That my foot does not fit in any lone shoe
But has to,
So much has to have gone from me
To fit into you[.]

(Translated by Niloufar Talebi, 2008: 167)

Here she introduces a new persona, “Post-Cinderella”, that is completely different from the well-known Cinderella story. The interpretation of her “Post-Cinderella” requires a historical exploration of Cinderella and the beautiful women in the fairy tale. The shoe can only fit post-Cinderella’s feet and not the mythical Cinderella. Unlike the mythical Cinderella, the new Cinderella is empowered with mobility. She becomes a flying beauty. The lone shoe does not fit her since she possesses a modern knowledge of her own being. She has gained recognition. The traditions and cold conventions cannot please her, since she does not fit in that shoe size any longer. However, she laments that she has to conform to the rules. She has to wear the mythical Cinderella shoe in order to

be identified within conventional society. Therefore she is captured and veiled by these conventions. Her identification is preconditioned to the traditional outfit that has been enforced and prescribed upon her. Once again the poet's use of metaphoric language and reverse language (mimesis) engages her in an essential dialogue which empowers the silent voices to be voiced.

Granaz finds new opportunities in her exile to Australia in 1997, and her struggle with traditions and norms continues with a new perspective between the feelings of longing and belonging. She starts her collection published in 2000 with the poem "The Sale", which is a long poem and shows the poet's rediscovery of her inner self and the generation she has grown up with in exile. As discussed in Chapter 4, because of intense censorship and restriction imposed on authors, many writers decided to leave Iran and live in diaspora. Many works in exile are written about the themes of being in limbo. The expression and language of these works in exile can depend on the poet's integration into the new country they live in and the diasporic opportunities available to them. However, this sensation of being in limbo in Granaz's poetry creates a new space and language for the poet that is representative of women's contemporary discourse in Iran, and it also displays women's diasporic discourse. This new language or 'feminine syntax' illustrates Luce Irigaray's definitions of '*parler femme*': What a feminine syntax might be is not simple nor easy to state, because in that 'syntax' there would no longer be either subject or object, 'oneness' would no longer be privileged, there would be no longer be proper meanings, proper names, 'proper' attributes [...] instead, that 'syntax' would involve nearness, proximity, but in such an extreme form that it would preclude any distinction of identities, any establishment of ownership, thus any form of appropriation. (Irigaray, 1985: 134)

This 'feminine syntax' appears in contrast to the masculine perspective in Granaz's poetry. In other words, '*parler femme*', in her poetry, involves exploring the shape of women's imagination and eroticism (*jouissance*), in such a way as to give way to a new poetic discourse in Iranian women's poetry. This feminine syntax, as explored in previous paragraphs, is characterised by dislocation of poetic diction, disruptive syntax, apparent disorder, fluidity, repetition and fragmentation. In these poems she offers new meaning to this feminine syntax and offers original perspectives on it by suggesting it as a way to realise the connection between her inner self and her belonging and a fixed feminine nature defined by the authorities. The friction between her longing and belonging can be seen in her poems "Denunciation" and "Bell", from her collection

Barefoot Till Morning. In one poetic persona she refuses to return to Iran and in the other she wants to go back. This theme is repeated in her new collection *Red Memories*, in the poem “I want to go back”. These images of longing and belonging are located in much of Granaz’s poetry, and they show the poet to be in a state of limbo. This space of in-betweenness brought a new realisation of the self to the poet. Robert Young suggests that the limbo state “is the site of enunciation, the instance of every utterance” (Ikas & Wagner, 2008: 84). In her poem, “The Sale”, Granaz applies the elements of this feminine syntax:

I’ve wrapped the moon’s head in a scarf,
slipped the bracelets of the world on her wrists,
rested my head on the gypsy sky’s shoulder
and goodbye...

(Talebi, 2008: 161)

Similar to Simin’s gypsiesque poems, Granaz uses a gypsy as the symbol of desire, fluidity, mobility and hope. Here the gypsy also confronts the social boundaries and limitations instituted for women. The gypsy has the potential to shield the persona of the poet and appropriate her with new possibilities that are open to her gender. The poet is gendering the sentence structure in this poem, and starts to build up new elements in this feminine syntax to suggest new definitions for them. For example, she transforms the definitions around the natural and the animal worlds. Ravens or ants are taken instead of the classical nightingales of Iranian poetry to express the symbol of love, while moths are described as vagrants and butterflies are explained as being tame, instead of the classical meanings such as being submissive and incapable of speaking about love:

You’re late
Nothing’s left
except
a shirt full of vagrant moths,
the same shirt once filled with tamed butterflies[.]

(ibid)

Moreover, the poet has changed the image of the classical lover and the beloved who exists to be gazed at. She also transforms the metaphoric meaning of natural elements, such as a rose with a geranium to convey spring coming:

Go to my house

That day and water the geraniums

Spring might come[.]

(ibid)

The poet here, again, has transferred the image of classical Persian poetic gardens from symbols of paradise and the spiritual world to the natural and material world. Watering of the flowers is a necessary precondition for the arrival of spring, and it has a direct relation to the reawakening and renewal of the persona. The classical metaphoric meaning of other elements, such as the moon, has also shifted from the symbol of the attractiveness of the beloved to virginity and pureness. Whereas she leaves the country on the shoulders of a gypsy, she pictures a return to her country and meeting her lover under the escort of the moon:

And one day if someone
backtracks in the night
looking for trinkets from the past,
one day if a girl
appears whistling distractedly
to herself and the moon,
that would be me,
returning to pick up my tattered tomorrow
to piece back together before morning's prayer.

(ibid)

In other words, Granaz utilises the natural elements to give voice to the persona's self-enunciation in classical metaphoric discourse, and she explores these created feminine syntaxes to help her to find a way to '*parler femme*'.

In addition, the poem is written in a non-linear time structure, and the tenses (past, present, future and a future that could have been) are non-sequential because of the conditional tense (if) in the poem. This is to show the status of the persona and perhaps the poet in her exile. However, only by being next to the moon can her return become possible. The enunciation of her inner self is thus secured through the elements of nature. Through these natural elements she creates the world of '*parler femme*'. Although Granaz has some political poems that show her anger at the policies of her own country, the uniqueness of her poetry in exile distinguishes her from some diasporic poets, such as Fatemeh Shams, who also focus on national belongings in their

poems. Granaz accentuates this different attitude by refusing it twice in the beginning of her latest work, “Red Memories”:

I wander
Until the end of the path
Neither East
Nor West[.]

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

Granaz’s latest collection, *Red Memories (Hafeze-ye Ghermez)* was published in 2011. The collection revolves around the voice of forbidden and blocked memories in the terrified mind of the poet. It tries to pass the experienced feelings of stress and suffering on to its audience. In this collection, playing with poetic diction, sound, and letters is intensified. The content of the poems in the collection is constructed around three pivotal themes: I exist, I am a woman and I am equal with you.

The theme of existence of ‘I’: it is evident in this collection that the poet is making attempts to enunciate her inner feminine self. For example, in her poem “*Asrar-e Ganj-e Dare-ye Jenni*” (“The Secrets of Jinn Valley’s Treasure”) she reverses existing patriarchal norms that do not count women as companions:

“I don’t tell any man” that he is not alive
“He has never been alive”[.]

(Translated by Mahrokh S. Hosseini, 2016)

Or in her poem “*Bekhan*” (Read):

Still, it snows from Adam’s rib
A few other tablets of this madness remain
this exhausted body aches of all the medicines[.]

(ibid)

The theme of the female voice: the voice or sometimes a mix of voices, exists almost everywhere in the collection. These voices are sometimes anxious, nervous, full of hatred, maudlin, depressed and angry. For example, the voices of anger, sadness and agony in the poem “Read” are evident in the persona’s loss of femininity and the reduction of her individuality:

But I am standing alone in purifying this soil
Even on that day I was becoming a woman from Adam’s rib
Not any day I became a human
I have to admit I found myself in my body

And my concubine, to the winds would not be annulled[.]

(ibid)

Or, in “*Sapho*”, she repeats the pronoun ‘I’ in several places of the poem and stresses the presence of female identity, sharing the world of the feminine body:

It’s I without I with another I

Just becoming a woman

I draw a whole body to your half-done

You are my other half

I become addicted to your I

And you are my body[.]

(ibid)

The theme of inequality: the poet, by using elements of religious and historical allusions, as well as intertextuality and proverbs, attempts to challenge inequality as the reason for women’s oppression throughout Iranian history. For example, in her poem “*Raghayam*” (“My Veins”), the persona refers to a childhood play which they used to sing in circles:

The air was full of praying and broken bones

And an uncle who always plaits my chain

This time with the song of dirge and grenade

Shackle and bangle

Brings the party of solders as his souvenir[.]

(ibid)

The image and representation of women and girls in Iranian children’s songs has long been a subject of concern. There are far fewer females than males in almost all forms of children’s songs, and those who do appear are often portrayed in very stereotypical ways. Granaz here refers to constantly polarised gender messages in children’s songs to express how they influence women’s empowerment. In these songs women are not recognised as individual subjects; they are the others whose existence depends upon men, and the value of their existence is defined by their natural qualities that relate to serving men. Granaz criticises these songs and with the technique of mimesis reverses the masculine empowerment. The poem here blames the dirges and religious songs which try to maintain the power of masculine authority by repressing, controlling and chaining women’s voices.

On the whole, the creation of a feminine syntax is one of the characteristics of Granaz's poetry and she creates new literary identities for Iranian women by her feelings of displacement and diaspora. Her first four collections of poetry are expressive of the younger generation after the Revolution, whom she has grown up with and experienced the war, and political and religious reinforcement with, in her everyday life. However, in her latest work, "Red Memories", Granaz shifts her approach of writing about the sufferings of her generation and uses personal poetic diction to develop a feminine syntax, by using natural elements to transgress the masculine culture. The concept of *parler femme* in her poetry provides a fresh discourse which allows for the possibility of the continuity of the female persona's existence and self-enunciation. The poet's redefinition of Iranian poetic metaphors and images allows her to express her feelings of non-belonging to other nations, unlike some diasporic poets. Instead, she announces her belonging to nature to give a voice to her invisibility, immobility and non-existence. By employing a novel language, particularly in her latest collection, similar to Irigaray, Granaz uncovers the absence of a female subject position, the relegation of all things feminine to nature/matter and, finally, the absence of sexual difference in Iranian culture.

In other words, Granaz seeks to revalue Iranian female identity and, similar to Irigaray, the existing images with which women were traditionally classified. She challenges the validity of the conceptual hierarchy which favours a metaphorically masculine culture over a metaphorically female nature. One might criticise Granaz for her essentialist poetry and her writing on biological sex differences, not sexual difference. However, similar to Irigaray's definition of sexual difference, in her latest poetry collection Granaz significantly stresses sexual difference, as a difference in a rhythmic pattern of female bodies that is cyclical and irreversible, and not linear or punctuated like men's bodies. Attributing this biological sexual difference to Granaz's poetry, it is possible to claim that the intricacy, effectiveness and productivity of this approach indicate that essentialism has an underexplored strategic usefulness which feminists should consider.

Conclusion

The poetry of Tahereh Saffarzadeh, Simin Behbahani and Granaz Moussavi show a shift in their discourse from traditional Islamic themes as mothers, wives, protectors of the revolution, warriors and martyrs, to more gender equality themes during the three

decades after the revolution. Female sexual desire appears in the language of their poetry as multiple beginnings, succinct diction, fragmented sentences, and illogical reasoning, as well as a refusal to follow sequential patterns, and defiance of fixed definitions and positions.

As advocates of Islamic themes after the Revolution, poets such as Tahereh are not critical of patriarchal society, they do not excavate the monosubjective (masculine) character and tradition of Iranian culture in this period. Moreover, they do not seek in their poetry to express the conditions necessary to develop a culture of the feminine. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that one cannot connect Islamic poets such as Tahereh to Irigaray's three phases.

Although Forough is considered to be the pioneer of the female poets who initiated writing about the erotic elements of the female body, other female poets such as Simin Behbahani, and young poets such as Granaz, after the Revolution continued to insert these erotic elements into their poetry. They provide reflections on the first, second and third phases of Irigaray's work, and showed how two sexually different subjects can survive by creating a third space, and explored the possibility of *parler femme* by embodying a "house of language" in their feminine syntax. The project of writing about the body in feminist poets' work, such as the poetry of Granaz Moussavi and Simin Behbahani, to borrow Irigaray's words, "upsets the linearity of a project, undermines the goal-object of desire, diffuses the polarisation toward a single pleasure, disconcerts fidelity to a single discourse" (Irigaray, 1985: 30). In doing so, they resist typical arrangements of male sexual desire. Their work does not follow the traditional Iranian narrative pattern of experiencing pleasure: arousal, tension, climax and resolution (ibid: 133). Instead, these poets use language to represent a female sexual pleasure that opposes and reverses the linearity of male pleasure. Female desire in their work contradicts traditional logic and disorders syntax. These feminist poets adopt an associational eroticism that forms their poetic diction and expression, to articulate a female desire, a desire with multiple endings and beginnings, multiple orgasms, multiple voices, multiple patterns of female sexual pleasure.

However, the degree of their stress on this issue is different. Feminist poets inside the country such as Simin challenged gender roles, criticised questions of gender inequality, particularly in their later work, and they changed their forms and thematic concerns. But the intensity and impact of their work is very different from the younger generation's voice, which is more furious and outraged. Moreover, the younger

generation's ease of access to online social media made their stance more visible than the previous poets.

Moreover, young poets in diaspora, such as Granaz, escaped from the frequent censorship in Iran and became more successful in representing this shift in women's discourse. These exiled poets could concentrate on the elements required to share the culture of two and cultivate the hospitality between the two more explicitly when compared to the female poets inside the country, or the female poets of previous generations. Self-publishing poets such as Granaz, have in recent years used the digital world to distribute their poetry collections, and due to censorship in Iran this has become a trend amongst many poets who want to unveil their voice.

Conclusion

These poems will say what and who I am in a relation with nature, and in a relation with the other. They are a way of letting the other hear something of the mystery that I represent for him, of allowing him with signs which permit him to misrecognition, of providing him with signs which permit him to safeguard the two and our dialogue. Poetic language is more appropriate to this work than speculative discourse where, in part, I talk the other's language, using his grammatical and lexical norms. (Irigaray, *Everyday Prayers*, 2004: 47)

Although my own experience of writing poems and reading women's contemporary poetry in Iran inspired this doctoral project, coming to the end of this journey, I am pleased with what I have learned from the research. As I mentioned in my Introduction, the research is situated in a multidisciplinary field and, in turn, it contributes to several areas of existing scholarship on gender and sexuality, Persian literature, and Iranian feminist media and cultural studies. I am fully aware that producing findings from poems where I, as the researcher, have taken some responsibility for several translations of the poems could be seen as problematic. Moreover, the arguments I make regarding the implications of these poems by poets who are not alive, are derived not so much from the empirical data but from my reading of the literature and reflection on my experience of reading poems, and knowing Iranian culture.

Hence, in this Conclusion, I highlight some theoretical and methodological contributions I make to research, as I reflect on some of what I consider to be the most expressive issues and findings the study has formed. I then briefly reflect on the possibilities for further research.

Research Findings and Contribution to Knowledge

This study is an attempt to signal how Luce Irigaray's work provides a novel and productive perspective on the broader context of Iranian women's poetry. In this respect, this study has explored the question of duality of subjectivity and reconsidered Irigaray's deconstructive techniques, arguing that they can contribute to an exploration of the ways in which Iranian women poets deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations in their writing.

In my Introduction I argued that, in the global field of media and cultural studies, there is a dearth of scholarly literature on the connections between Irigaray and the theoretical, linguistic, spiritual and artistic practices in Persian literature, specifically in relation to women's work. In fact there are no studies that have focused on the experiences of gender and sexuality from an Irigarayan perspective in Persian women's poetry. Since deconstructing stereotypes from within is the aim of Irigaray's work, her thoughts can be linked to Persian women's poetry, composed from 1905 to 2016, as an approach aimed at uncovering masculine phallogocentric practices and their method for the elimination of the female subject.

It was also argued that there is limited study of the Iranian female literary tradition, and many surveys of literature have covered only the works of men. Farzaneh Milani, in her *Veils and Words* (1992), suggests a call for more studies and investigations upon the silence and veiled voice of women in the Iranian written literary tradition. This research answered this call, and shows women poets' resistance against individual and social confinements in each period of the women's literary movement in Iran. Further research on Persian women's poetry, from a qualitative as well as a feminist point of view, was essential. I also argued that despite the critical reviews of her work, it is possible to engage and contextualise Irigaray's work in relation to feminist theory and practice in contemporary Iranian women's poetry, particularly from a deconstructive point of view.

To address the gaps in the available literature, the key thing that I have sought to do through this doctoral thesis, from a feminist perspective, has been to explore the representations of gender and sexualities in contemporary Iranian women's poetry, and the ways in which such images have changed the representation of women in Persian poetry over time. In addition, I discussed how women's existing experiences of identity are informed by the poetry produced by women in Iran. I investigated these key questions through three sub-questions: firstly, what aspects of gender issues are present in Iranian women's poetry? Secondly, in what context is women's poetry produced in Iran, and how do different power structures stimulate the representation of specific gender issues in women's poetry. And finally, how does Irigaray's literary approach contribute to exploring the way in which the selected Iranian women poets deliver a subversive discourse of gender relations in their poetry?

I then showed how the poets can be seen to deploy Irigarayan themes in regards to a woman establishing herself as an independent subjectivity. And, finally, I

demonstrated how the poets approached a positive definition of relations which is dialogic in essence. This study observed dialogue on the level of women's writing in Iran and its relation to a variety of historical periods. An analysis of the social and political forces behind the women's discourse in each era, and a discussion of women's activities in each era, played a crucial role in my analysis of these women's discourse. I considered the production of Iranian women's poetry during three distinct phases: the constitutional period (1906-1922), the Pahlavi era (1925-1979) and the period following the 1979 revolution.

My purpose was to focus on the literary activities of women in these three phases, and to show how they started to reform and rethink gender, as well as how they opened the doors to dialogism. Some examples of the poetry of key women poets in each phase were provided to identify the commonly used themes and subjects of the era. These poets and their poetry challenged the manner in which the female subject is symbolised, despite severe restrictions on their socialised subjectivity. Their poems' thematic concern is female self-enunciation from a gendered perspective. I have sought to explore the implications of the voice and resistance in the poetry produced by women. Irigaray's concepts have been crucial in forming the conceptual frame of this study. The style of poetry and the poets' rhetorical devices have been analysed using an Irigarayan reading, to explore the distinctive female imaginary and female subjectivity, and to renounce the restricted women's subject positions (gender-restrictive values) in traditional Iranian poetic discourse and culture.

More specifically, this study has engaged with Irigaray's philosophy, her perception of sexual (sexuate) difference and the strategies of resistance that she has developed in her work, to explore a feminine culture. Irigaray's theories and images of the feminine 'other' have been correlated to the poets' own images as an illustration of an Irigarayan aesthetics, whereby a relation can be defined between the complex sets of implications in Irigaray's oeuvre and the meanings examined in the poetic contexts under assessment. Irigaray's discussion of self-enunciation and enactment in her work connects to the representation of the feminine in Iranian women's poetry. An essential aspect in this sense has been the study of the strategies employed by the poets to form feminine self-enunciation, and in this way I have placed their poetic creativity within the wider context of feminist politics of gender representation in Iran. A key assumption in the study has been the recognition that embodied poetic writing, from an Irigarayan perspective, engages a poetic narrative which seeks to preserve and promote a "*phuein*",

a becoming, articulating a poetic vision and message to readers (Irigaray, 2004: 30). Irigaray's concept of '*parler femme*' and embodying a 'house of language' in a feminine syntax incorporates furthermore an ethical dimension to the selected poets' poetry.

From an Irigarayan stance, it can be argued that the poets in this study invoke a feminine other in their poetic discourse that can be read and listened to at the level of the unconscious or figurative language. The poets' utilisation of distinct poetic styles, and their unique individual aesthetic performance, foregrounds a female subject position both in Iranian literary syntax and culture. These female poets' subject position had not previously been made explicit in Iranian dominant masculine literary imaginary. The masculine imaginary, from an Irigarayan perspective, tries to look for 'closure', but the feminine syntax ends in infinite or open endings (Whitford, 1991: 153). By representing a feminine other in their poems, these women poets try to address the suppressed element in the binaries of the literal imaginary, confronting these oppositions and generating an amendment to the symbolic system. In this way, Irigaray's concepts of '*parler femme*' and the adoption of a feminine syntax strongly resonate with the female poets in this study. They represent their rebellious voice as an expression of an other that is endless, subversive and transcendental. It is then rendered through the poets' imaginative and artistic processes into '*jouissance*' or "more in keeping with their bodies and their sex" (Irigaray, 1991: 45).

On the one hand, the poetry is dialogic. These poets appear to be delivering an unconscious message to the masculine symbolic system through their imagination, voice and poetic style. On the other, these poets convey an aesthetic performance and sensory message to their readers or listeners in order to provoke a reaction. The thoughts, notions and metaphorical use of Irigaray's expressions have therefore offered a significant feminist analysis of these poets' voices. Irigaray's analysis of phallogocentrism suggests that women have not been able to fully become subjects of language and culture, except when women take on a masculine position within the established implications promised by the phallus, which eliminates women's physical experience of body and *jouissance*. Irigaray's concept of *parler femme* is intended to enunciate the position of women as articulating and writing subjects. These poets adopt an effective subject position from which to articulate and write their poetic language as women; they seek to invoke the reader or listener in a profound and more perceptive way of reading. For this reason, the poets form their own poetic style, develop their own

narrative and attempt to converse with readers through their poetic lines, challenging cultural and social patriotic norms in a conscious manner.

Moreover, it can be argued from this analysis that the combination of the poets' voice and their poetic writing is closely connected to the female body. The creation of new meaning in the poets' writing, their poetic diction and approaches, has been linked with expressions that do not exist in the same way in men's poetic articulations. This aspect was significantly more noticeable in the case of the poets after the Revolution, such as Granaz Moussavi and Simin Behbahani, and also in the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad in the Pahlavi period. Their poetic imaginary seems in some cases to represent a desire to analyse their inner selves that is then articulated externally in their poetic lines through bodily expressions.

Women's experiences of gender and sexuality in Iranian society from the constitutional revolution to the present day are shown in chapters 2, 3 and 4, and it can be suggested that women's critique of gender issues reached its climax after the 1979 revolution. An analysis of the social and political forces behind women's discourse in these chapters helped in understanding the different phases of the poets' discourse. It also helped in understanding how women's activities in each period have had a crucial role and function in women's literary production. The study of women's movements and the feminist consciousness in these chapters are supported by the application of Irigaray's theories. More explicitly, the discovery of the themes, forms, types of characters and discursive contexts that shape women's literature before and after the Revolution could be the answer to the adaptation of different approaches and strategies for each poet in each period. Each poet has adopted a different style or tactic to engage with the themes they want to open up in their poetry. Yet some common concerns can be followed in the content of their poetry, across the thematic concerns from each period.

Feminine-maternal performance is one common theme in the content of the poets' work. According to Irigaray, Western culture's dichotomies are caused by man's need "to differentiate himself from mother and/as nature and to master them by means of techniques, beginning with the one which organises language itself" (Irigaray, 2004: 136). She continues that, in the masculine tradition, a series of analytical rules claims to organise the entire culture. Irigaray states that art develops into a "secondary domain with regard to logical requirements, and is often used as a practice or method to facilitate men's power" (ibid: 136-137). Irigaray encourages the renovation of a type of

art in our society that leaves behind its role of restraining the body (ibid: 137). This kind of art “abandons its role of mediation between nature and humans, between humans themselves and between humans and gods – a mediation in love and in the access to the divine” (ibid). Irigaray’s reflections thus inspire the development of a poetic language, which has been connected to these poets’ creative poetry as a form of representation that maintains the reader’s link to a maternal voice, a feminine-maternal performance that is associated with the expression of female pleasure (*jouissance*) and retracing a suppressed maternal origin.

Another important thematic concern to note in this research is the feminine libidinal economy, which according to Irigaray is multiple, sensual and autoerotic: “everything is exchanged, yet there are no transactions” (Irigaray, 1985: 213). In other words, she grounds feminine *jouissance* in the distinct morphology of the female body. According to Irigaray, introducing a feminine imaginary would give voice to feminine *jouissance* and renovate the phallocentric social world. Chapters 5, 6 and 7, in particular, on the voice and the feminine libidinal economy, engaged with Irigaray’s feminine imaginary and identified enunciations of female desire. Through my analysis of Zhale and Parvin’s poetry, one of the themes that Chapter 5 focused on was the importance of the maternal-feminine and the mother-daughter relationship. This theme provided space for the poets to signify their feminine imaginary. The poets then shared their experience in a mimetic engagement with a written masquerade of femininity that was used in the poems to reverse the conventional implications about women’s status, as well as to articulate a distinctive identity that is the result of the poets’ feminine desire (*jouissance*). Within the context of cultural signification, the recurrence of the maternal voice in the poets’ poetry within different periods in Iran indicates a manner and technique of reframing the archaic masculine relationship in terms of its origin (mother) and obtaining a space or “house of language” in which to institute their self-enunciation.

The thesis introduction raised a central question about the nature of studying Iranian women’s poetry from the constitutional revolution to the post-revolutionary period. It suggested a link with Irigaray’s three phases: the first phase is to criticise the auto-monocentrism of the symbolic subject, the second is to define a second subject, and the third is to define a relationship or an ethic between the two different subjects. This suggested division can help us understanding the persistent developments in contemporary Iranian women’s poetry, starting from the constitutional period. My

analysis of poems from three periods strengthens this idea and shows that in constitutional women's poetry, placed in the first phase of women's work after 1906, poets such as Zhale were critical about the reduction of the female to the 'other' of man. They continue to prefigure the issue in terms of Irigaray's "free[ing] the two from the one" (Irigaray, 2000: 129-139) by their emphasis on women's education. In the second phase (during the Pahlavi era), poets attempted to cultivate and embody the female subject, and simultaneously shift back to expressing 'the reality of two' more openly. Finally, in third phase of their work, mostly written in diaspora after 1979, they tend to focus on the manner in which the female subject relates to her other, and shift to concentrating on the elements required to share the culture of two and cultivate hospitality in between the two. To share the culture of two the poets signify feminine *jouissance* in their poetry as an implicit strategy. They seek to challenge the dominance of phallic elements by writing feminine difference into culture. The results of my study of poets from each period in chapters 5, 6 and 7 indicate that in recent years the poets' easy access to online social media has made their feminist stance even more visible than it was for previous poets. Younger poets in diaspora, such as Granaz, escaped from the frequent censorship in Iran and became more successful in representing the shift in women's discourse to a concentration on the elements required to share the culture of two. It can be assumed that these poets could cultivate the hospitality in between the two more explicitly in comparison to other female poets inside the country or the previous female poets, who were faced with a great deal of censorship.

Although the current study is based on a small sample of poets, my findings suggest that the poets generate a transcendental relation that corresponds to their feminine imaginary and inspires a "*phuein*" or a becoming, by creating their imaginary and poetic writing. This aspect shows that the concept of *parler femme* can be considered as an essential signifier in the reading of and listening to women's poetry in Iran more widely. Irigaray's philosophy becomes fundamentally appropriate in current Iranian women's poetry, because the poets can be said to create expressions of the other's repressed feelings, that is, the feminine, and enunciate a poetic language that can be viewed from within the perception of Irigaray's feminine culture. The poets' cultural writing can be discussed in this pattern as opening up meanings that disrupt or weaken hegemonic cultural norms and the conventional ethics of Iranian society.

Furthermore, my analysis of the poems shows that gender identity in Iran cannot be detached from the Islamic concept of *sharm* (self-erasure), and that self-control in

behaviour and appearance, confinement of physical mobility, and sexuality are all features of power over gender politics in Persian classical poems. The women poets discussed here have been effective in showing their resistance to masculine power structures. The poets return to the concept in each period, in a search for recognition and self-enunciation. Analysis of the poems revealed that the poets' search for self-enunciation and recognition of women's identity is to some extent dependent mainly upon their reflection on the concept of *sharm*. My analysis of poems by Zhale concluded that gender identity in her poems is challenging the concept of *sharm* and she expresses her feelings more freely, without restriction. On the other hand, Parvin's few poems of reflection on gender identity are more guarded. She does not refer to herself directly or state her subject position, and she employs figurative language to disguise her identity. Parvin is more restrained in recognising the suffering and pain of women in her society. She uses a cautious, more concealed language, making use of animal allegories and associated objects to portray her message. She has self-control in behaviour and appearance; confinement of physical mobility and constrained sexuality are all features of her poems, which also reflect the characteristic gender politics of that period.

Although both Zhale Ghaem-Maghami and Parvin Etesami wrote their poems in the same period, Zhale wrote her poetry in secret and, unlike Parvin, she was not obliged to follow the moral standards of her society. Therefore it is possible to claim that the female voice in non-published and secretly written poetry in this period is stronger because these poets did not need to submit their writing to the standards of the power structure of classical Persian literature. Also, it can be understood that the poetry of women who started to publish in this period was slow in initiating a debate over women's issues and transgressing political boundaries, as they had to consider the standards of authority before their own voice. However, this was not the case later in the Pahlavi period, with Forough's poetry, and in the post-revolutionary period with poets such as Simin Behbahani and Granaz Moussavi, who expressed their feelings without considering any cultural or political boundaries. Forough is considered the pioneer of the female poets who wrote about erotic elements of the female body, and other female poets such as Simin and mainly younger poets, especially diasporic poets, after the Revolution, continued to insert these erotic elements in their poetry and therefore challenge codes of *sharm*.

In this regard, I hope the study has contributed an argument for an engagement between Iranian women's poetry production and Irigaray's philosophy and aesthetics of

her oeuvre. Irigaray proposes a less linear and more dynamic, variable and responsive way of expression connected to the feminine language. Attached to this perception is the institution of a dialogic and fluid (open-ended) relational pattern with the 'other'. In the analysis of the poems from the post-revolutionary period, it was demonstrated how women's poetry and their voice can be enunciated around the duality of subjectivity (dialogic subjectivity), and also how Irigaray's literary approach can contribute to exploring the way in which the selected Iranian women poets deliver subversive gender relations in their poetry. More explicitly, it was shown how the selected women poets express a relationship between self and other in their poems and how they deconstruct traditional images of women. Analysis of these aspects of feminine writing allows us to understand difference and the experience of women with respect to their own subjectivity and their perpetual suffering in each period from the constitution to the post-revolutionary era.

Writing poetry in the post-revolutionary period suggests a collective identification of the readers with *jouissance*; a reaction from readers to the female poet's poems occurs via the dynamics of rhythmic and artistic display in the poems. However, the exchange between poet and readers functions in mutual ways, as the *jouissance* created in the process of reading or listening to a poem also takes place through a revival of identificatory procedures in the readers. This poetry continues to generate artistic cultural renovation in their readers or listeners' minds. What is valuable is that the creation of women's poetry becomes readable and visible; their poetry connects to both male and female addressees, thus the poets' imaginative articulation can be said to encourage their readers or listeners. Iranian women's poetry in the post-revolutionary period, as an expression of the artistic imagination, in an Irigarayan sense, becomes visible from the whole of the living universe, as "from a silent background" and inspires its readers and listeners to dialogue, beginning from their existence and from breath and nature (Irigaray, 2004: 140-141). In order to renovate "energy", according to Irigaray, it is important to create a space to "welcome what is perceived and let it act" (ibid: 135). Iranian women's creativity in this period can be read and listened to in an Irigarayan mode, as if their poems emerge from a whole, where poetry relates to the living world and allows for a self-enunciation through breathing, silence, sensual desire and articulation.

Approaches to overcoming phallic language in my analysis of this poetry included 'mimesis' or mimicry; masquerades; the recognition of the duality of

subjectivities (difference between two) and self-enunciation of the feminine 'I', through cultivating female desire (*jouissance*) or illustrating female erotic associational discourse in women's writing; breaking with traditional, grammatical and lexical norms (morphology); and the need to alter and "rehabilitate" marriage conceptions, women's position, education, and the mother-daughter relationship. These techniques were used as tools for the poets, particularly the post-revolutionary poets, to enhance their critical voice, to convey Irigaray's different phases, of monosubjective (masculine) nature and norms, replacing them with recognition of duality. Using Irigaray's pattern of writing, the poets in the post-revolutionary period not only criticise and define a second subject but also define a relationship or dialogue between two subjects.

These Iranian women poets benefit from these techniques to define the conditions required to form a language (a voice) and a culture of the feminine. However, the degree of their stress on gender issues is different. Although feminist poets inside the country challenged gender roles, criticised the questions of gender inequality, and changed their forms and thematic concerns, the intensity and impact of their work is very different from the younger generation's voice, which is more furious and outraged. This can be explained in terms of the impact of historical or political events such as the Iran-Iraq war, poverty, censorship, and control and restriction by the government in almost every aspect of life, beginning from childhood, education and entertainment, youth and adolescence. Therefore, it can be argued that power structures, religious beliefs and social values in each period had a direct relationship upon the production of women's poetry in Iran. Finally, the significance of the role of diasporic poets in developing the body of diverse voices in Iranian women's literary map should be carefully studied. In a sense, because of absence of power structures' impact and censorship guidelines diasporic women's poetry can be considered as an impetus to the process of deconstructing the masculine patterns and conventional paths of morality.

Implications for Future Research

I would like to point to areas where this study raises issues that could be addressed in future research.

Firstly, the scope of this study was limited in terms of its ability to cover Persian women poets in print. It would be valuable to discuss other women poets in a similar vein, particularly from the post-revolutionary period. For example, there has been a great increase in diasporic women poets, and the accounts that are emerging as part of

this new wave articulate the narratives of a generation of women who have achieved the opportunity to express themselves openly. This is the beginning of a growing body of exile literature and discursive spaces that will expand and widen the way both the country of Iran and its women are identified in the world. Study of this new, growing group of poets and their applied techniques would be a useful subject of further study.

Secondly, the achievement of my analysis is to emphasise the success of Iranian women poets, because the poems are indeed reflections of success, showing women who have been able to transcend the restrictions imposed by patriarchal structures. I also aimed to open the poems up to a more complex and nuanced analysis, which demonstrates that their poetry is still shaped and constricted by these structures, and the implications of this need further study with respect to Iran and elsewhere.

Finally, another potential avenue of future research would be a parallel study on emerging Iranian LGBT or queer literature, which it is not yet legal to publish within the country. Such activities and writing, mainly in the digital world, could be analysed in terms of their content and form, and via an Irigarayan intervention in their work. No such study has yet been carried out in Iran and further experimental investigations are needed in this field, to consider how gender in Iran might be 'queered'. We need new critical paradigms to explore Persian poetry by women; in my thesis I have hoped to explore such directions using Luce Irigaray. In hoping to create a dialogue between Western feminist theory and Iranian culture, I am following the principles of Mikhail Bakhtin, who is a major theorist in Iranian studies, and who has been much explored by the West. Maybe Irigaray's work has more to offer Iran; we shall see.

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